



Parents as Leaders

- PCL Module 1

Parents as Leaders: Module Objectives




- Define leadership as it relates to participants and their current and future roles as parent leaders
- Describe the critical roles that parents of individuals with disabilities have played in the history of education of children with disabilities
- State personal concerns regarding parents' roles as leaders and advocates

Defining Leadership: A Think, Pair Share Activity



- Take 2 – 3 minutes thinking about and writing down your definition of parent leadership, including your personal experiences as a leader.
- Find 2 – 3 people to talk with about your definitions. Come up with a single definition to share with the whole group.
- Share your definition with the group. All responses will be recorded.

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Parent Leaders: Contributions to Disability Policies and Practices

Parents as Leaders: Pre-IDEA



- 1933: Five mothers of children with mental retardation in Cuyahoga County, OH organize to protest schools' exclusion of their children. Result: A special class in the public school
- 1950: 42 parents and others meet in Minneapolis on behalf of children with mental retardation. Result: Establishment of the ARC

Parents as Leaders: Pre IDEA



- 1949: Parent of a child with cerebral palsy founds the United Cerebral Palsy Association
- 1960s: Parents of children with mild to severe retardation sue the state of Pennsylvania to obtain a “free and appropriate education” for all students with disabilities.

Parents as Leaders: Moving to the IDEA



- ARC members, professionals, and other parents continue to lobby hard for federal legislation for children with disabilities.
- Result: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as the IDEA.
- The IDEA contains provisions requiring parents to be members of IEP teams, to participate as educational decision-makers, and to have the right to due process.

Current Roles for Parent Leaders



- Policy makers/advisors/consultants
- Program evaluators
- Members of task forces
- Advisory board members
- Leaders of parent advocacy groups
- Grant reviewers
- Members of boards of trustees
- Group facilitators

Benefits of Parents as Leaders



Benefits to programs and services:

- Providing parent perspectives
- Bringing a sense of reality to ideas and tasks
- Improving the quality of services and supports
- Ensuring that programs and policies meet the needs of families

Benefits of Parents as Leaders



Benefits to parents and professionals

- Enhancing skills
- Working from a strengths perspective
- Seeing others' points of view
- Appreciating the expertise of others
- Acting on a vision

Challenges to Parents



- Professional reluctance and resistance to viewing parents as partners and leaders
- Professional reluctance to “overburden” families
- Fear of the things parents might ask for
- Parents’ reluctance or fear of assuming new roles
- Administrative and organizational barriers

Setting the Stage For Successful Training



- Greeting participants as they arrive
- Ice breaker
- Ground rules
- Parking lot

Critical Elements of Collaboration

PCL Module 3



Objectives



- Define collaboration as it relates to collaborative parent leadership in a variety of settings
- Learn about the defining characteristics and principles of collaboration
- Define the elements of an effective collaborative teaming process
- Identify the stages of team development

Essential Questions



- What are the origins of collaboration and collaborative teaming practices?
- How is collaboration defined in the literature and in practice?
- What principles form the foundations of collaboration?
- What structures, processes, and practices contribute to effective collaboration in a team context?

Agenda: Critical Elements of Collaboration



- Defining Collaboration (15 minutes)
 - Metaphors for collaboration
 - Rationale and context for collaboration
- Understanding Collaboration (45 minutes)
 - Underlying principles
 - Five essential elements for effective collaborative practice
 - Stages of group development

Defining Collaboration: Metaphors for Collaboration




- Think about two situations in which you have participated where collaboration was supposed to occur. Think of one **positive** example, and one **negative**.
- For each example, think of a metaphor or image that describes this situation.
- Share your metaphor or image with one or two partners.
- Following your discussion, share your top 2 favorite metaphors with the whole group.

Understanding Collaboration



The power point that follows highlights some of the elements of collaboration that have been written about in the literature.

This literature comes from the fields of psychology, education, social services, and more recently, the business world.

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Underlying Principles and Characteristics of Effective Collaborative Teams

I. Five Underlying Principles



- Collaboration:
 1. Requires that all team members want to work together towards a common goal
 2. Is based on a sense that all participants are valued
 3. Embraces the unique perspectives of all team members
 4. Is based on a strong sense of purpose
 5. Requires trust and a sense of shared responsibility

Key Assumptions



- Teams must value diverse membership and ideas
- Each member has expertise
- Teams must have a common purpose
- Team members need to trust one another
- Trust allows members to share in decision-making and responsibility

II. Five Essential Characteristics



1. Face-to-Face Interaction
2. Positive Interdependence
3. Interpersonal Skills
4. Monitoring and Processing of Group Functioning
5. Individual Accountability

Face-to-Face Interaction



- Regular opportunities to meet
 - Must be convenient for all members
- Appropriate group size
 - Literature suggests membership of 5 – 7 is best
- Effective communication systems
 - Decide how communication will occur between meetings (phone, e-mail, minutes, notebook, etc.)

Positive Interdependence



- Identify team goals and purpose
- Use distributed leadership functions
 - Rotate roles, share tasks and resources
 - Roles: facilitator, recorder, time keeper
- Develop a common understanding of the group's scope of work and authority
 - e.g., ask: What kind of decision-making power does this group have?
- Identify common rewards and opportunities

Interpersonal Skills



- Develop group norms indicating desired behaviors/types of communication
 - Examples: arrive on time, respect diverse points of view, no judging during creative problem-solving
- Develop communication and conflict resolution skills
 - All group members need to practice their best communication and collaboration skills
 - Learning to deal with conflict is key



Monitoring and Processing of Group Functioning

- Develop time and methods for regular processing
 - Regular processing is key to the growth of the group
 - Best to conduct processing at the end of each meeting or on some other regular basis (e.g., once a month)
 - It's also good to take a deeper look one or two times per year

Individual Accountability



- Use agendas
 - Review agendas at the start of meetings; add items and identify time to be spent on each item
- Use minutes indicating action items and “to do” lists
 - Minutes need to identify decisions that were made, and tasks to be completed by individual group members
- Identify strategies for building a sense of responsibility
 - Rotate roles, share tasks, praise group and individual accomplishments, etc.

Collaborative Decision-Making



- Identify and Use Specific Decision-Making Processes:
 - Consensus-based decision-making is most common in collaborative groups
 - Sometimes consensus means deciding “I can live with that”
 - Democratic decision-making (i.e., voting) may be used when consensus cannot be reached, as long as the group agrees to this approach ahead of time

Final Thoughts on the 5 Characteristics of Collaboration



- Which of the ideas presented above make the most sense to you?
- Which elements have you found most challenging in your own experiences with teams?
- What have we missed in thinking about collaboration?

Understanding Conflict

PCL Module 7



Objectives



- Define various approaches to dealing with conflict
- Understand the uses, strengths and limitations of various approaches to conflict
- Reflect on:
 - personal strengths and challenges in relation to conflict
 - the ways in which these can enhance or serve as a barrier to effective leadership and collaboration

Essential Questions



- What are some of the most common approaches to dealing with conflict, and what are their strengths and limitations in various situations?
- What approaches to conflict do you generally use, and how do these help or serve as barriers to your ability to be effective in situations involving conflict?
- In what ways might you improve your own practices related to managing and resolving conflict?

Agenda



- Discussion: *Why is it important to think about conflict? (5 minutes)*
- Group activity: *Strengths and limitations of personal conflict styles (20 minutes)*
- Power point presentation: *Approaches to conflict: What is your style? (15 minutes)*
- Activity in triads: *Applying conflict theories (15 minutes)*
- Closing discussion *(5 minutes)*

Discussion: Thinking About Conflict



- Think about various teams or groups of which you have been a member.
 - What types of conflict did your group experience?
 - What factors may have led to this conflict?
- In what ways can conflict be beneficial to collaborative teams?
- In what ways can conflict be challenging to collaborative teams?
- What can you and other team members do when conflict arises?

Overview of the Five Conflict Response Styles



1. **Avoiding:** Not addressing the existence of conflict.
2. **Competing:** Being assertive and pursuing your own concerns, sometimes at expense of others.
3. **Accommodating:** Letting go of your own ideas in order to satisfy others' interests above your own.
4. **Compromising:** Middle ground between competing and accommodating, where you give up some of your ideas but not all of them.
5. **Collaborating:** An approach in which people go beyond their own interests and solutions to create something new

Group Activity: Exploring Your Personal Conflict Styles



- Based on the definitions provided above, pick the one style that best describes how you respond to conflict in a team situation.
- Gather with others who have chosen your definition to discuss this style.
- In each group, choose someone to facilitate the discussion, someone to take notes, and someone who will report back to the large group.

Group Discussion Topics



- Define the response style that you have selected.
- Give 3 – 4 examples of when you might use this style.
- Discuss the benefits of responding to conflict using this style.
- Discuss the challenges of responding to conflict using this style.



Approaches to Conflict

What is your style?

Five Conflict Response Styles



1. Avoiding
2. Competing/Controlling
3. Accommodating
4. Compromising
5. Collaborating

Avoiding



- What is it?
 - Deciding that you don't want to take on a particular conflict.
 - Choosing not to engage in a particular conflict.
 - Not addressing the existence of a difficult issue or conflict.

Avoiding



- **Avoiding is best used when you are:**
 - Withdrawing from a “hot” situation.
 - Deciding that this is not a high priority issue for you.
 - Waiting for a more appropriate time to deal with the conflict.
 - Concerned that a confrontation may be damaging to you or others.
 - Don’t feel you have the power or authority to address the issue.

Avoiding



- Personal and/or Professional Costs to Avoiding Conflict
 - Important decisions may happen without your input.
 - You may have important information, input or perspectives that others don't have.
 - Underlying interests/issues that really are important to you may not get resolved.
 - Over time, your silence may make you feel like your opinions don't really matter.

Competing



- What is it?
 - Standing up for your rights or beliefs
 - Being assertive.
 - Pursuing your own beliefs, values and concerns.
 - At times, asserting your opinion at the expense of others.

Competing



- **Competing is Best Used When:**
 - The issue is vital to you, your family, or your organization, and you need to stand up for your values and beliefs.
 - It appears that someone needs to take charge of a challenging situation.
 - There is an emergency or question of safety and a quick decision needs to be made.
 - An unpopular course of action needs to be implemented (i.e., you need to enforce rules in a situation involving safety or discipline).

Competing



- Personal and Professional Costs
 - This style generally sets up “win-lose” situations.
 - It’s difficult to promote democratic decision-making and/or creative problem-solving when a competing style is used often.
 - The sense of power gained by individuals using this style does not create an inclusive environment for others.
 - Frequent use of a competitive style can escalate anger and conflict.
 - If you use this style all of the time, people may develop a negative view of you.

Accommodating



- What is it?
 - Letting go of your own ideas in a conflict, often for the purpose of satisfying someone else's interests above your own.
 - Being cooperative, conceding to the wishes of others.
 - The opposite of competing.
 - A quick way to resolve a conflict.
 - May involve selfless charity or generosity.

Accommodating



- Accommodation Is Best Used When:
 - The issue is more important to the other person than to you.
 - You want to demonstrate that you are reasonable, and/or you realize that you are wrong.
 - You recognize that by ending the conflict through accommodation, you will not risk losing everything.
 - It's important to preserve harmony or avoid disruption.
 - You believe that the sense of cooperation you are building now will enhance relationships in a way that will be beneficial over time.

Accommodating



■ Personal and Professional Costs

- If used too often, an accommodating style may deprive you of the influence, respect, and recognition you deserve.
- Your professional growth may be slowed if you don't give yourself the chance to offer your own ideas and perspectives.
- The person(s) to whom you make accommodations may get their desired results, but the underlying cause of conflict may remain unaddressed. Resentment can occur on the part of all involved.

Compromising



■ What is it?

- Compromising is the middle ground between competing and accommodating, in which each of the people involved in a conflict gives up some things and not others.
- Compromise can be thought of as “sharing the pie” or “splitting the difference.”
- It requires both assertiveness (e.g., standing up for what is really important to you) and some level of cooperation (being willing to give up that which is less important to you).

Compromising



- **Compromising is Best Used When:**
 - All or some of the issues being discussed are moderately important to you.
 - The people involved realize that it is more important to solve the problem than to “win.”
 - There is a sense that it is possible to reach a “fair” or temporary settlement.
 - A quick middle-ground solution makes sense and brings at least partial satisfaction to all involved.

Compromising



■ Personal and Professional Costs

- Compromises may cover up the “real issues” and lead to a future power struggle.
- Over-use of compromising may result in a climate of constant negotiation and/or “game playing.”
- The fact that “everybody wins” may make you feel like a group of individuals rather than a real team.
- You may experience a sense of personal cost if you “give in” on values and beliefs that are very important to you.

Collaboration



■ What is it?

- An approach in which people go beyond their own interests and solutions to create something new.
- Asserting your own self interests, while respecting and cooperating with the interests of others.
- Meeting the interests of all parties to the maximum extent possible.
- A win for everyone.
- “One for all-all for one.”

Collaboration



- Collaboration is Best Used When:
 - You want to find a solution that meets all needs and doesn't compromise anyone's critical beliefs, values, or outcomes.
 - You are using a team approach in which you are trying to equalize power, gain commitment, and merge insights.
 - You have time to work towards a true collaborative solution.
 - You have authority to implement the solution.

Collaboration



■ Personal and Professional Costs

- Real collaboration may take a lot of time. It requires lots of investment in terms of time, energy and hard work.
- Problems that need to be solved very quickly or in the face of threats to safety may not be the best candidates for collaborative approaches.
- Collaboration cannot happen unless team members have a sense of trust and respect for one another, as well as a sense of shared participation and power.
- There is a need for all group members to check in with each other to make sure that true collaboration is occurring. All members need to feel heard and included. If not, this may lead to some people feeling that one or two people are resolving issues while others are accommodating or avoiding.

Final Thoughts



- Each of us has our own style with which we are most comfortable or skillful.
- Most of us use more than one style to some degree.
- We sometimes mirror and are influenced by the conflict styles of others.
- The more we recognize which styles work best in particular situations, the better we become at responding to conflict.

Case Study Activity



Imagine that you are the leader of a four person parent advisory committee that has done a lot of research on ways to enhance activities available to students with disabilities and other students who are experiencing challenges in your school. After months of hard work, you have submitted a proposal to the school board for an inclusive after school program that your group feels will benefit all children. Yesterday, you got a call from the principal saying that the school board has chosen not to approve the proposal for budgetary reasons. You are about to hold a meeting to decide what to do next and have had a few preliminary calls that suggest that members of your committee have different opinions on the topic. One is really angry, because he believes that the principal and school board members care more about supporting sports teams than about supporting kids who struggle in school. He's ready to call the chair of the school board and the principal to let them know how he feels. Both of the other two members of your committee feel that the budget for the program was pretty high. One feels that your committee should start over and come up with a totally new plan that the Board will support, while the other thinks your committee should ask the board for ideas about how to scale back the current program so that it would be acceptable. You are not sure what solution is best, but you don't think the group would be well-served by being either too assertive or by giving up. As your meeting begins, you are wondering how to resolve the conflict that is likely to take place during your meeting...

Case Study: Questions for Discussion



- What are the primary conflicts that you see in this situation?
- Based on the information you have, what are the conflict response styles of the members of the committee?
- What is likely to happen if group members rely only on their preferred conflict styles during the meeting? Think about 1) what might happen within the group, and 2) what might happen to the group in relation to the school board's decision.
- What other options does this group have, and what conflict response style(s) might be most helpful in this situation?
- What might you, as the facilitator of the group, do to support the group in working towards solutions to 1) inner group conflicts, and 2) the challenge you face in dealing with the school board?