Ladder of Family Engagement and Leadership

Child-serving organizations interact with parents and caregivers in a variety of ways and for multiple purposes. The framework below depicts the continuum of family participation in early childhood program leadership and decision making, culminating in parent empowerment, self-efficacy, and leadership.

This resource was developed collaboratively with Educare family leaders and adapted from an original version created by Lori Pittman, Educare Seattle/WA State Parent Ambassador Program.

PARENT EMPOWERMENT, SELF-EFFICACY. AND LEADERSHIP

Delegated or Shared Power

Parents/caregivers are empowered to lead initiatives and share equal power with agency staff and/or governing body.

COLLABORATION

Partnership

Parents/caregivers are engaged, informed, and consulted in decision making processes in collaboration with staff and/or governing body.

TOKENISM

Consultation

Parent/caregiver perspectives are considered as part of the decision-making process, but the parents are not part of the decision making authority.

TOKENISM

Placation: to soothe; stop someone from feeling angry

Placation

Parents/caregivers are informed and encouraged to express their perspectives with little or no impact on the outcome(s).

EMPTY PARTICIPATION

Informing

Parents/caregivers are informed of action and changes, but their views and values are not actively sought nor considered.

TOKENISM

Tokenism: the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort

Decoration

Parents/caregivers are invited to participate for the sake of appearances to fulfill a participation mandate or give the impression of family involvement.

CONTROLLED PARTICIPATION

Manipulation

Parent/caregiver actions and words are directed by staff. Parents may be asked to "rubber stamp" decisions or speak only using the organization's authorized messages.

