

Engaging Parents as Advocates and Leaders Webinar Series: Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement (Video Two)

Melia Franklin: Hello. Greetings, everyone. We're excited to have you on this webinar today. I am your host. My name is Melia Franklin, and I am a consultant for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I wanted to give you a little bit of a tour on the session engagement tools so that you can get the most out of this webinar. There's a few things that you can do. And before - you know, while we're getting ready for the main content, I encourage you to play around. Everything can be sized and resized using the little triangle at the right - bottom right-hand corner. One thing that I really want you to pay attention to, and also can be minimized and maximized, is our Q&A icon. So, that's where you can submit your questions. There is also an icon to download resources and to mark helpful links and know that there are - there's a tip sheet as well as the slides for this webinar in the resources, and we encourage you to download them. And if you need tech help, there's that big yellow question mark. But really this - feel free to play around. If you have a question, something goes away and you want it back, you can click the question mark - yellow question mark for help. One thing I know many of you have questions about is your certificate for participation in this professional development webinar. And there is going to be a pop-up for a survey at the end of the webinar. And you can click on it and do the survey then, or you can wait until you receive the thank you email for your participation, and the survey link will be in there too. And once you fill out the survey, then you will receive your certificate. So, I'll mention that a couple more times, just wanted you to be aware that that we have that in top of mind.

So, just wanted to welcome you to the second in a series of webinars, entitled "Engaging Parents as Advocates and Leaders," and we are highlighting tools and resources and strategies that are promoting equity responsiveness and collaboration with families and in each one of these, we explore a different lens through which to look at engaging parents as advocates and leaders. And we just want this webinar that we're going to have today is about "Developing Leadership Through Culturally Responsive Family Engagement." And we know that our demographics and our communities are changing all the time, and Head Start programs like yours are working really hard to adapt in order to provide every child and every family with the highest quality education and care. And so, in today's conversation, we're going to be talking about developing leadership and advocacy skills using culturally and linguistically diverse strategies, or responsive strategies, so that we can do our best to engage these families as advocates and leaders. And so, we know that building trusting relationships is a hallmark of Head Start's approach to engaging families. And today, we're going to be talking with three experts, Head Start director from Portland, Oregon, as well as staff members of a very innovative early childhood education program, also in Portland. And our presenters, one of them started as a parent leader, will share their experiences in how they have successfully built trusting relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families and encourage them to become advocates and leaders.

So, you know, one of the first questions we received was how can we - what are the different ways we can engage families? So, we're going to talk about that, especially through the lens of using culturally and linguistically responsive strategies. We have many wonderful resources that are all - the links are all in the tip Sheet that you will find using the Resource widget. One resource that we wanted to point out is "Relationship-Based Competencies." This is a wonderful guide that has really concrete ways to recognize and implement these relationship-based competencies. And one of them, competency number two, is "Self-Aware and Cultural" – sorry, "Self-Aware and Culturally Responsive Relationships." So, that's really a lot of what we're going to focus on today. And I wanted to start with a poll drawing from this competency. So, even if you haven't reviewed it, it's totally fine. This is just to kind of get you thinking about what practices you already have in place.

So, we're going to take a couple minutes to go to this poll and just get you thinking about this topic a little bit before we dive into the content. We'll give you about 30 or 40 seconds to do the poll. Right, we're getting some responses. [Inaudible] We'll give some more time because we don't have that many yet participating. We're just encouraging the use this tool as a way to engage with the topic. And one of the things is using a variety of communication strategies to reach families, and I can see a lot of y'all already do that as well as showing sensitivity and respect for families, cultures, and languages. That is also something a lot of you do. And maybe, still many but maybe slightly less are communicating with families in their home language. I've got about half of folks who have participated right now. And so, I'm going to go ahead and share the results so that you can see them as well. And just interesting to see which ones perhaps people have areas that they can grow. So, one is seeking information or consultation about specific cultural values and practices when necessary. So, I think you'll hear from some of our presenters a little bit about how they've done that. But it really seems like there's a lot of great practices already in place, and what we hope for is that you're going to be inspired by these real-time stories that take place in programs just like yours. So, now we're going to - I'm going to turn it over to our first presenter, Pam Corrie. Take it away, Pam.

Pam Greenough Corrie: Hello. This is Pam Greenough Corrie. I'm the executive director for Mt. Hood Community College, Child Development and Family Support Program, and we operate Head Start/Early Head Start and the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, and we're just outside of Portland, Oregon. I'm a past Head Start parent and have been with Head Start for the last 40 years. My grandmother and mother came to the United States from the Philippines after the war, and they spoke three languages. I grew up in a multilingual home and have always been passionate about serving children and families whose first language is not English. Today, I'm going to share how we at Mt. Hood Community College Head Start have adapted to our changing demographics and created opportunities for parents from culturally and linguistically diverse families to become leaders in Head Start and beyond. In Head Start, we have built-in systems for family engagement. We believe that the child's first teacher is their parent and that parents should be involved in decision-making for their child and for the direction of our program. This is how we work towards being a culturally responsive program. In Head Start, we serve 1,400 children in 24 different locations. One of our key strategies is to use a demographic data of our community. Our enrollment reflects this data. Currently, 40% of the families we

serve are Latinx, and 67% of our staff speak two or more languages, 30% of our staff are also past Head Start parents, which is a hallmark of Head Start. In addition, we also operate the Child Care Resource and Referral for Multnomah County, and we provide training and technical assistance to all family, friend and neighbor care, family child care and child care centers in Multnomah County. This is provided in six different languages. Additionally, we have several culturally specific family child care networks.

What's a family child care network? It's a group of 10 to 15 family child care providers from a specific culture and language. We currently have a network for Spanish speaking, Russian speaking, Vietnamese, Somali, and also African American networks. Each one of those networks has a culturally specific coordinator who provides training and technical assistance to increase the quality of care within a cultural context. So, our journey is never over. This is how we got to where we are today. In the early 1980s, our service area started having an influx of Southeast Asian children and families, and we struggled to meet their needs and we lack in understanding of their language and culture. We soon realized we needed to hire staff from the culture to help us learn how to meet those needs for those families. By the 1990s, we saw an increase in Latinx families. We knew from our past experience that we had the highest staff who spoke English. That was when we added bilingual pay as another strategy. This is a 5% pay increase to any staff member who speaks a language that is needed in our community. And each year, staff that are speaking other languages, they are assessed, and once that is figured out that they are going to be serving families that talk that language, then they get that 5% throughout the whole year no matter whether families change or not. So, we also ensure that we have at least one Spanish speaker in each one of our classrooms. In addition, we have language-specific family workers and home visitors.

Currently, we are seeing more and more languages that are diverse in our service area. When we have families to speak Arabic, then we make a point to place an Arabic speaking staff member at that location. We developed a partnership with our local migrant education program to open classrooms that were culturally specific and taught in Spanish. It was called "El Futuro." Migrant education provided us with a culturally specific teacher who taught alongside with the Head Start teacher. Later, when our community had an increase in Eastern European immigrants, we opened up a culturally specific program called "Detsky." We hired staff who spoke these languages, giving them the 5% bilingual pay. The classroom materials were specific to the cultures of children we served. As trust started to build, we found that both Latinx and Eastern European families chose to enroll in our classrooms throughout our service area. As we continue to learn from our families, we move to providing all of our written materials in Spanish and Russian. This included home visit records, parent questionnaires, etcetera. As parents joined our Parent Policy Council, we started providing simultaneous interpretation with headsets. Each of our staff have access to a language line for immediate interpretation needs. In this process, we developed a partnership with IRCO, which is a local immigration and refugee organization. And by the way, their website information is on the tip sheet that's included with this presentation.

I think an important lesson we learned through the years is that we are not the experts in every culture and that it takes true partnership with parents to learn from each other. Parents are children's first teachers, and we have a lot to learn from parents. It is through our home visits that parents and staff work together in service for the child. The trust that is built from these relationships empowers parents. They join our Parent Policy Council, which has developed - helped us to grow and to meet their ever-changing needs of our community, one significant change that Policy Council made was in our selection criteria for Head Start. After reviewing local reports about the disparities that families of color, especially Native Americans and black families, Policy Council decided to give extra points to these families to ensure better access to services. Parents are able to share information, their ideas, etcetera with on-site interpreters who simultaneously translate the conversations through headsets. Everyone wears a headset so that the conversations happen in real time. Five years ago, our community assessment showed that we had an increase in the number of Burmese families in our service area. When we looked at our data, we realized that we had a few Burmese families enrolled in a variety of our locations. It was challenging to get interpreters at all the different locations. So, when preschool promised a state public preschool program, put out a request for proposal, we decided to write an application to create a Burmese classroom. We approached IRCO, our local immigrant and refugee program that we had been working with for many years. IRCO provides with an assistant teacher who is Burmese and speak several dialects. In addition, she helps our Burmese families access social services through IRCO. Our Head Start teacher herself was a past refugee from Eastern Europe. Though she is not from their culture or life experiences, she knows what the challenges are for a newly arrived immigrant family and what they have to face. The Head Start assistant teacher is also Burmese. These three professionals support the classroom of 20 children and families. Our classroom is co-located with several other early learning programs in an old school. We currently have children that speak Burmese, Chin, Kachin, Zomi, Karen, and Rohingya. The staff speak most of these dialects. Parents are welcome into our classroom. As they volunteer, our teacher engages them in helping to plan the curriculum and our classroom environment. We work to have materials, toys that represent the children's culture. Classroom labels are in English and Burmese. And in the fall, there will be labels that have English phonetic pronunciation in Burmese to help the teacher in communicating with the children. We provide children's books in Burmese along with culturally specific artifacts. Some have been donated by the families over the years.

I would like to share two success stories that are related. Our first assistant teacher from our partner at IRCO worked in our classroom for three years. During this time, she enrolled in Mt. Hood Community College's ESL and CDA yearlong course, obtaining her CDA and improving her English skills. Meanwhile, she also began to volunteer in other classroom and after she got her CDA, she decided that she wanted to come and work from Mt. Hood Head Start. And so, she is now teaching as an assistant teacher in another building in other classroom. Meanwhile, during that time, we had a very active parent that volunteered on a regular basis that was a Burmese parent in our classroom. And she applied for the IRCO position and she is now the new assistant teacher from IRCO. And she is currently working towards her CDA in an ESL class. In addition, we also have our Mt. Hood Head Start assistant teacher, and she is also Burmese, and she has now decided to get all of her documents translated from her country, and she has entered into

Mt. Hood Community College and will be finishing her associate's degree this next year. She is hoping to become one of our classroom teachers in Head Start. This last year, we reached out to a local program. It's "Cairo," which is a Somali agency that provides cultural navigators for school aged children in the schools. We applied for a city funded Head Start classroom in partnership with "Cairo" for us to open a Somali classroom following the same model, and we're just in the stages of beginning to do recruitment for this fall. And as you can imagine, it's a bit of a struggle with the current COVID situation.

So, in summary, I really want to talk about some of the key factors that have been part of our success. As we all know, Head Start home visits are actually where we all begin in terms of establishing relationships. And we're - that's where we meet parents where they are. Are they just needing to navigate the new culture? Are they ready to participate? Do they have trust, understanding of our program yet? And how we do that is by hiring staff from the culture and the languages that they speak, and how we can retain those staff is because we pay that 5% bilingual pay. Valuing the home language and providing support to families to keep that home language is an important element of our program and engaging parents in planning for their children and also for the program is an excellent leadership opportunity. And number one is remembering that there is more to learn from our parents and community every single day. Events surrounding the police violence within our black community has inspired us to do deeper learning on racial injustice within our program. Recently, we've had a program conversation over Zoom, where I learned more about the racial inequities that our staff face within our program. This has humbled me and has inspired us to develop a white affinity group to do a deeper dive into our own implicit bias and how, as a program, we can continue to make changes to be more inclusive and to better engage with our families and community.

Melia: Thank you so much, Pam, for that rich storytelling and so many ideas packed in and so many experiences packed into that presentation. We got a question that you may have heard before about. The question reads, "We honor cultural backgrounds of our families that come to United States, would it be possible to impose English as the medium of instruction from Early Head Start?" And so, I wonder if you could just speak to anything about the values and research perhaps just briefly that has informed Head Start practice on honoring home language.

Pam: While research really has clearly documented the importance of home language, especially in the birth to three years and beyond, and what we have learned is that children learn both English and their home language at the same time. And so, therefore it's not ... Sometimes, people feel like their child can only learn one language, and having grown up in a bilingual home, I can tell you that we speak multiple languages all the time even in one sentence. And so, we really want to impart with our families the importance and recognition because we know that children that speak their home language have a stronger sense of self confidence and knowledge of who they are and how they relate in the world. And it's important to us to engage those children in those home languages. When we did El Futuro, which was a bilingual Spanish program, we always started at the beginning of the year, teaching everything in Spanish. And then, by the end of the year, things would start to come towards English, and that was that children played on the playground with other kids. And they started just picking

up English on their own naturally so that by the end of the year, children were speaking fluently, both English and Spanish, and that's been our experience. Melia?

Melia: That's such a great informed by practice answer, Pam. So, excellent job. And there's been a lot of other questions coming in. I think you've answered some of them. And then ... But one ... While I wanted to just point out that after - the presenters finished after our hour on this webinar, there's going to be a 15-minute open Q&A, where we'll be able to come back to some of these questions, but I hope that some of you who asked questions got them answered during the presentation. And we'll stick around till after the presentation. I wanted to basically go to another poll right now to give you a chance to think about some of the things that Pam has brought up. And think about your program, particularly, in how it engages diverse parents as advocates and leaders. And so, there are different ways that that shows up, and this poll is really an opportunity for you to think about how that's showing up in your program. Pam is talking about volunteering to having Burmese parents come and volunteer. So, think about those who are the least represented in your program in terms of their culture and language and how comfortable they are in volunteering. And how maybe you're engaging them and designing and leading activities. So, I am going to give you a couple moments to answer the poll and see ... And then we'll take a moment just to go through it. Well, thank you. And one of the things that I'm sure comes up for a lot of you are that you may not share the same culture as the families in your program. And there's many, many ways that cultural - culture influences us as people. So, for example, the way we feed our children, the way we dress them, all of those things are culturally informed. And so, making an environment in which parents are comfortable talking about their child during practices and their opinions, that's something that it looks like right now about half of you do. And it looks like a lot of you have regularly participating volunteers. And it looks like some of you maybe you're struggling a little bit more to have parents lead and to design activities or lead activities. And we're going to hear a lot more about that in the next - from the next presenters.

So, I'm going to have us all looks like ... Not quite half of you have responded so far. But we ... Just a lot of reflection I think to kind of understand what our strengths are and where we can progress in our strength. So, really, I just think there's so much richness in listening to parents about their child care and children pains and practices and to ask yourself, as a staff person, you know, what am I bringing to the table that might make it harder for me to hear this. And then, I really hope that in this next part of the presentation you'll get some concrete ideas about how to encourage parents to lead culturally specific activities and to design them and also, to get parents involved in leadership positions, formal leadership positions. So, there's obviously a lot of great things going on and a lot of room for growth as always, and thank you for participating in the poll. And so, now I want to move to our second set of presenters from the P-3 program in Portland, Oregon, Multnomah County. So, all of our presenters are from Multnomah County, Portland, Oregon area, and I want to first welcome Mani to talk about the P-3 program. So, over to you, Mani.

Mani Xaybanha: Thank you so much. Hello, everybody. Yes, I am Mani. I am the P-3 Prenatal to third grade program specialist here at the county, and I just really wanted to start out by sharing that, you know, parent leadership and partnership and participation is really - and it really an important topic to me as I am one of those - was one of those new Southeast Asian families that arrived to the US in the 1980s as Pam had mentioned earlier. I came from the country of Laos as refugee, and immediately following that year that we arrived, I entered into kindergarten speaking no English, not really understanding the school system. And I was lost, and my parents were equally lost as English was a barrier. And there was no school-based programs at the time to support families from different cultures or who don't speak English. It was just not as inclusive as it is today. There was absolutely no one that was able to personally reach out to my parents to support them and to help them to be a part of, you know, their children's learning and education. There just wasn't very many or zero opportunities in the past unlike there are today for families who are receiving it today. It's through the Head Start program and the - and the P-3 program. And because of this, it really impacted my parents and I in that we felt left out, and we felt left out of the school community. It didn't give us a sense of belonging, and I just think that's really sad. But it also goes to show how important programs like Head Start and P-3 and any school-based programs that really support early learning and families is important. I just want to say the benefits of engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families as partners and leaders are, number one, to really to better understand and serve the community, and number two, to really support parents with a sense of ownership over their children's education as well as leadership skills and perhaps even career pathways. So, here in Multnomah County, we are partnered with culturally specific and culturally responsive community organizations and agencies. And as Pam had mentioned, one of them was IRCO, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizations. And there's many more in Multnomah County that are culturally specific because we do see the P-3 program work as equity work. And here in Multnomah County, we currently have 10 sites, you know, as a school based program, and all of the folks that work in these programs are right now females of color, and half of them speak languages other than English. And that's how we are like trying to be really engaged and responsive to the current population that we - that we are seeing that are, you know, relevant in each school community.

And I just want to share that, you know, P-3 is, again, like I mentioned, a school-based program. It really focuses on working with families and underserved and underrepresented communities to not only provide school readiness activities through such a thing as a Play and Learn Groups. But P-3 also builds close relationships with parents and givers and caregivers and families to really foster that leadership in their own children's education. And this is really done through elevating parent voice, especially from communities of color, engaging parents with volunteering in the schools, helping them lead, plan, and coordinate school events and functions and just providing space for parents to gather and to take on that role in their school community is really important work for P-3. The core services in P-3 as I mentioned, the first one is Play and Learn. Play and Learn is like a family engagement, group activity that is held twice a week for families with children ages zero to five. And one is usually held in a specific language and the other one is held either in English or as the multicultural group. And right now, out of the 3 - out of the 10 sites, we currently have groups held in Spanish, Vietnamese,

African American, Slavic, and then Nepalese and Bhutanese. And those Nepalese and Bhutanese are the two newest communities that we are seeing here in Portland and we are fortunate enough to have culturally specific groups for that population. Another piece that P-3 provides is definitely leadership opportunities, whether through a school family leadership team or one specific to P-3, and it's very intentional. It provides pathways for parents to build that trust and to feel comfortable volunteering in the school or leading school activities or events. And then again, just supporting them in their - in their journey or even through a career pathway that they may be interested in, you know, either becoming staff assistance to the programs and going on further.

Another piece of the program that is very intentional is that we do provide parents support by hosting parent cafes where parents, caregivers, and neighbors come together to connect, to have meals together, that most important to have really intimate conversations that are relevant and important to them in their school community, where they're really building protective factors, you know, building on resilience, knowledge on child development, support and communication and healthy relationships, etcetera, just to help them build strong families but also to have that sense of togetherness and community is so vital to the program. And these Parent Cafes are also held in culturally specific groups which we are really fortunate to be able to do. A part of P-3 program is also that we do support incoming kindergarten families with transition. And we specifically outreach to, again, those families out there who are either underrepresented or underserved. We really make an effort to reach out. And the last piece that we do for P-3 is we also support teachers within the school building on Parent-Teacher Home Visit. And again, that could be supporting them as being the second person or just through language or just being there to really get to connect and build relationship with families. One piece about play and learn is that the play and learn groups that are held for families and children ages zero to five is modeled after the Kaleidoscope curriculum, which is an evidence informed practice that started up in like the Seattle, Washington area. And again, this is a program that support parents, caregivers, and neighbors, and it's a really responsive curriculum in that it is created with participants based on the preference and needs of the families and the parents. Really, the family's interests and priorities is really central to the Play and Learn Group. And often this is where leadership begins for parents. They start as coming in and attending Play and Learn Groups, and, you know, a couple weeks down the road, they're the ones who are leading story time or leading a song or movement, and it's just amazing to see whether in English or in their own language. And the curriculum from Kaleidoscope is also very flexible, super flexible, where it's adaptable, like I said, to the needs and to the responsiveness of a family.

So, I want to say that - the really the core piece of - the core thing of P-3 work is really their place there in this site to really make the school environment a warm and inclusive place where families feel welcome. And they know they have support and access and resources to information automatically. And working with families before they even are registered into kindergarten or to the school to provide that kind of Head Start into the school system really has a positive impact for families, especially families of color. And I want to say this P-3 program, like I said, it's very flexible. It is open to anyone in our Multnomah County area school

community. Families can go to multiple P-3 programs to participate and they can go even to ones that are held in different cultures and language that families have an interest in learning Spanish or, you know, Vietnamese. And so, it's pretty - it's pretty amazing. [Intentional Leadership Pathways] Pretty amazing. The impact that I see from this work when I started as a P-3 worker, I was trying to - really hard to connect families of color - with color and underrepresented communities to the school. I saw a need for this to elevate voice and to have them present in the school because often in the school communities, we see a lot of PTO, PTAs. And to be honest, it's really white dominant. And as I started that, I really wanted to elevate parent voices that were not being heard in the school community. And when I was a P-3 coordinator, I started a parent leadership group titled "Bridging Communities," and I started with - it with a site manager that worked in afterschool programs and the principal. And we, intentionally, personally made phone calls and invited parents that we saw that had just some great potential to be leaders. And these parents were, again, parents of color, parents who didn't even speak English, spoke other languages or, you know, English was their second language. And we definitely just made an effort to contact them to ask them if they're interested in and - and being a part of this Bridging Communities group where they not only get to learn about each other's cultures and family lives and experiences but to have a space and platform for them to have their voices being heard and to have them participate in making decisions for their own school and community.

And, boy, I tell you, this started out with 10 parents, 10 parents who were of different cultural backgrounds, who spoke different languages. And, boy, did they rock this leadership group. Their voices were not just only elevated, but they were present in the school. They were the ones who are planning, hosting, coordinating back to school nights, literacy events, family heritage nights, supporting fundraising events. It was amazing. It was an amazing impact. And out of those 10 parents, half of them rotated in being part of the school parent council. And it's just the impact of this - this program where you can provide these opportunities, it's amazing 'cause we know, as parents who participate, they just become the natural leaders in their own community, especially if they're in a community of color or community that speaks English as a second language, and what happens naturally is that these parents just automatically outreach to other parents to participate and to benefit from the program because they see the positive impact from this. And I just want to introduce someone that kind of made this journey and, you know, went from being a participant in the P-3 program and evolved into a parent leader and then became my program assistant, and then now is currently a P-3 coordinator. And she went through that journey, and she is the fine example of that impact that we see when parents are engaged in programs like Head Start and P-3. So, I want to introduce you to our next speaker. Her name is Utica Abdullah.

Utica Abdullah: Hi, everyone. My name is Utica Abdullah, and I go by the pronoun she, her, and hers. I work for IRCO, and I am currently based at Sacramento Elementary here in Portland, Oregon. I've been a part of P-3 now for the past four years. How did I get involved? I was fortunate to be a stay-at-home mom looking for social interaction and ways to broaden my firstborn mind. I have four girls, and I started going to the library because, in Multnomah County, they had the library doing readings for the kids. And so, that's where I started in the

library. And then I wanted to do more, and it was so ... It so happened that by the time as I was pregnant with my third child, my fourth child, sorry, Mani had posted a flyer in the library that - that said, "Hey, we're starting this program called Prenatal to Third Grade Program at Sacramento, Lincoln, and Ventura Elementary." So, these are our elementary schools in Oregon. And so, I was sick and decided to have my husband take my third kid. And so, he did. Then he came home. I said, "How was it?" He came home and he said, "Hey, this is an awesome program. You need to take Naraja," and Naraja is my third born. "You need to take her all the time." She was Mani. Mani, who was the program coordinator at this time, she's teaching them how to cook and do different things. "This is a good opportunity for you to take her and have her mess up somebody else's place and not yours." And so, that's how I started and got involved in the program by just taking my daughter. Then I noticed changes, you know, my oldest two, they were - they're five years older than her, and they were in kindergarten at this time. So, then it was just me and Naraja and then you know, being a mom of three, and by taking her, she noticed the older kids going to lunch and playing and she noticed her parents as well, when we would sit down, raise our hands for things, and asking questions. And Mani would ask questions, she would have the kids take turns in answering. So, she - and some of the kids were a little bit older and then they were using the potty. At this time, I hadn't started teaching Naraja yet. And she noticed it and she would always ask because of school being only two days a week - two days instead of, you know, every day, she'd always ask, "When are we going to go back? When are we going to go back?" And I would say to her, "Hey, well, you know, if you want to keep going, you got to be a big girl and use the potty." And so, I just noticed her wanting to go back and she started to use the restroom. And by the time my fourth one was here at age one and a half, she just went, she just was going, noticing big sister go all the time, just wanted to go. And then I want to talk about, you know, changes that I've noticed in myself and other parents. By Mani allowing me to share at times, because she would have me share, she would have me help sing songs, empowering to do these simple tasks within the program helped me to build confidence and just wanting to take part. And so, other parents started to do that and - and myself as well. So, then I became her assistant. She gave me a sheet and she said, "Hey, Utica, why don't you start planning." And so, then I started planning, I'd give it to her, next thing you know, she left to go to Multnomah County, and there I was taking an interview to become the program coordinator. So, it was a - it was quite a domino effect, just - just by doing this.

Then, as I continue in the program, I noticed as the coordinator, you know, I wanted to start a Spanish baby yoga. So, then I had a father that said, you know, "Hey, Utica ..." I was telling the story all the time of how I became a program coordinator to the parents. And so, then, you know, that encouraged them as well and I had parents asking and volunteering all the time. So, then there was a dad by the name of Oscar Ayala. He wanted to take part, he said, "Hey, Utica, you're gonna start the Spanish baby yoga, can I be the one to read the stories?" And so, I would just, you know, plan and give him what we're going to do, and he started leading these groups for me. So, my Spanish baby yoga was led by Oscar Ayala. Then I had an African American mom, Dylan Carson, that - that wanted to participate. She participated in the Early Kindergarten Transition Program, and she was also on our FLT team, our family leadership team called particularly said, Mind Leader as well. And so, these two parents started volunteering, and one

became assistant, and then like myself, she - she became a coordinator now here at Lincoln Elementary here in Oregon. And just by allowing parents to participate and take part in our groups, empowering them, encouraging them, allowing them whenever they ask to take part adjusting your - your program a little bit all the time for them, it helps empower them. And so, the domino effects, with me, started with Mani, encouraging and empowering me, and that I did with my two parents that asked and volunteered. And then even teachers started to ask, the African American night, it was like, "Hey, can Mani do a poem?" And then it was "Hey, can Oscar translate and interpret this for us?" And so, then they were always in the school, we were always around. We were encouraged.

And so, I would say to all Head Start leaders or any other coordinators out there, that when parents ask to volunteer, allow them to, you know, it's not hard to adjust the program a little bit to help encourage them and empower them to become leaders because that's what was done with me. You know, Mani allowed me to take part. And I was ... I felt good about it and I was able to take that interview. At first, I would tell her, "No, no, Mani, I'm not ready, I want to be a part of my girls' life and have to take them to this and that." And she said, "Utica, you can still do it. Why don't you do this? You can get paid for this." And I was like, "Really?" And then, you know, here I am today, a parent coordinator, and Oscar is an assistant and brunette now as well a parent coordinator for P-3. So, thank you. Thank you, Mani.

Melia: Thank you, Utica.

Mani: Thank you so much, Utica.

Melia: Mani, do you have a couple of words that you want to wrap up with?

Mani: Yeah, I just want to say, as Utica was saying that, these programs are really - yeah, she kept on repeating those words, it's really about empowering parents and elevating their voices, especially those ones who don't have voices, right? It's kind of - it's kind of like a really important part of our work, and we try to be as responsive in any way and anyhow we can from hiring staff that speak the languages, to just, you know, being flexible with curriculum. Yeah, I just - it really warms my heart to hear you Utica speak.

Melia: Thank you.

Mani: Thank you.

Melia: We have ... You know, this is a very unprecedented time that we're in. And so, many of us can't even remember when we sat with a group of parents because we've been mostly in our homes, and I'm wondering what your program is doing now to engage families, especially in a time of virtual learning, and how are you integrating that cultural responsiveness into that approach? Utica: Okay, I can answer that one, Mani. I can answer that one, Mani.

Mani: Absolutely. Utica: So, now I'm still doing my parent learning programs virtually. And then we also now ... Because Mani had mentioned before that we have parent cafes where we allow

parents, it's a space where we allow parents to come in. And we just talk about different things, always speaking from an "I" perspective to share ideas and how we raise our kids. And so, myself and my four colleagues, we are all of African American descent. And so, we started - we also started a brown girls meetup. A brown women's meetup, let me - let me say, and so we would meet at Glendoveer, it's a golf field here in Oregon, and we would take walks, maintaining our social distance, you know, wearing our mask and stuff. But we have been doing that as well to help with this time. And then my colleague and I, Jacqui, we did a graduation for our kindergarteners that's moving on for - five-year-olds that's moving on to kindergarten - to kindergarten. And just people put cones in the grass area in the park, and we had each parent sit by the cone with their kid on a blanket, and we were able to have a nice ceremony there as well. So, we've been doing virtual groups. And every, I'd say like about like three weeks, we would meet up all of us together but maintaining that social distance, whether it be on the grass or sitting on the top of our hoods of the cars, we've done that as well.

Melia: Those are great examples. Go ahead. Quickly.

Pam: I want to add, yeah, to that to that in other sites. We are, as we all know, with COVID-19, we are fully well aware that not all families have Internet access or even computers to engage. And so, in our Latino community, particularly, have been impacted by that. And so, our P-3 coordinators who work with the Latino community are well aware of that, and what they have been able to do is really deliver school supplies, activity kits, with notebooks full of songs, you know, physical activities, arts and crafts. They're being delivered to families intentionally to keep their children engaged. And because of this COVID, it's a tough time for all, and all of our P-3 coordinators are doing wellness checks on their families and keeping them connected and engaged in that way, especially if they don't have access to, you know, the virtual groups that all the P-3s are hosting. Yeah, been really great. Utica: Thank you.

Melia: Thank you so much for that, and I'm going to - we're going to do a couple things to close up. And then we're going to have 15 minutes of Q&A, and we've just been getting some amazing questions that I think everyone will want to hear answers to, and we'll do our best. So, for example, where do we get translators? Where do we get bilingual staff? And some other questions as well and more information about virtual spaces, especially like how do we do Policy Council. So, we're going to be transitioning to more of an open Q&A, and we'll have 15 minutes to do that. But for right now, I wanted to start having to do the last poll of the day. And this is really for you to reflect on one thing you learned that you feel like you'll either prioritize or put into practice in the next 90 days. One thing you learned in this webinar that you'll either try to implement or will prioritize. And if any question ... Just wanted to tell you, we hear you, you have lots of questions about Policy Council, during a pandemic and so we're eager to help you with that as well and share anything that our presenters know. I'm sure that many of you are using Zoom or Zoom-like platforms.

So yeah, just take a moment and think about what you - what inspired you, what you think you might be wanting to take a bite out of, maybe it's figuring out how to recruit more bilingual staff, partnering with a culturally specific or culturally responsive community based

organizations, maybe providing more culturally specific and/or linguistically accessible programs. I love the example of the brown girls walking program because that is both specific to the cultures and friendly but also virtual - not virtual but able to be done with social distancing. And I'm sure that a lot of folks are really struggling with how to hire staff. And I just wanted to bring up a point that Pam made about having a 5% increase in pay for those who are bilingual. It's a great recruiting tool. So, I'm going to - let's see how many people we have. Right. Going to give it just another few seconds before we wrap up and look at our answers. It looks like a lot of you are wanting to engage parents in planning and maybe even leading some programs, which is fantastic. And there are some great examples here. That seems to be the leading, most popular answer. I'm going to go ahead and -and give y'all a look at the results. And, you know, sometimes it can feel really daunting, and sometimes you just need to bite off a little bit to get a start. You don't have to do everything at once. So, we will look forward, hopefully, to hearing more on various platforms about that and just to give you ... First of all, a big thank you to our presenters. You all were fabulous, and we're going to continue talking to them during the Q&A. I want to encourage you all to look at the resources that are in the tip Sheet that you can download from the Resource widget. I think it's green. And I also want to share with you that these conversations are often continuing on the MyPeers Communities, and if you're already a member, you can find the parents - the PFCE Deepening Practice Community, the slide which you can also download in your resources, you can - shows you how to sign up.

So, take a look at that. There are lots of ways that you can ask these questions and get answers in real time from other practitioners, staff members just like yourself. And there's another opportunity to take your family engagement practice to the next level with Text4FamilyServices today. And so, this is a text messaging service that's free, and it was designed for family service providers like you, and it's also available in Spanish. So, this is a great thing. And that's easy to get on. You just text "PFCE" to the number 22660, and this is also on a slide. So, if you download and the resources, the slides, you will get that information as well. And so, at this point, we are going to transition to our Q&A, and I thought maybe we could start with ... Pam, if you could tell us more about what you are doing during the COVID time around Policy Council and also any other virtual services if you can just talk for a few minutes about that.

Pam: Sure, we use Zoom primarily to reach all of our families. And so, we are doing Zoom home visits. We do Zoom circle times with children and parents, and we also hold our Policy Council and our executive committee meetings through Zoom. Matter of fact, one of the end of the year's celebration, one of the things we were able to do is we emailed out through a local pizzeria e-gift cards so that they could all purchase and have delivered pizza, and that was - we all ate pizza online at Zoom meeting celebrating everybody's years of service and volunteer work. And, you know, it really was quite fun to be able to just relax and it was about, I'd say, 25 of our families attended that meeting. So, how in language interpretation works is that we have tried to bet, and we haven't gotten a lot of experience yet with Zoom, and their ability to provide interpretation, so, for right now, what we have found successful is our language interpreters actually get on the cell phone with the parents that are bilingual, I mean, meeting the language translation. And they actually simultaneously translate the Zoom meetings directly

to the parents and then when they have questions, then they actually just unmute themselves and translate the questions that the parents want to share or ask. And so, our meetings, we were pleasantly surprised, we have about 40 families that serve on our Policy Council. And we have been having an average about 25 to 30 parents consistently come to all of our policy council meetings. And one other thing we do is we also have a YouTube channel, where we actually also have things up for both children and parents that we provide.

Melia: And is that in multiple languages?

Pam: Yes. So, because we have 67% of our staff speak multiple languages, and so, we have a variety of people that have translated things. You know, like read a story in another language, that kind of thing.

Melia: Fantastic.

Pam: Did that answer your question?

Melia: Yeah. Yeah, it does. And someone also asked about how do you access your interpreters and maybe you could share a little bit about whether that comes through the Head Start, your Head Start infrastructure or is there another way you get access to the interpreters.

Pam: So, when we first started providing interpreters, we reached out to family members of our families, and they helped and we actually have a part-time hourly position that is just for interpretation. But really, I'll have to be honest, our best success has been our partnership with IRCO, the immigration refugee organization, they actually have a language bank and they actually translate both written materials and then they will actually... So, when we have a home visit, they will actually send out an interpreter with our home visitor. And so, that has been our best success, and we've actually ended up hiring some of those people as staff too, so ...

Melia: Right, right. So, that answers another question which is, how do we hire bilingual staff? And so, it sounds like the partnership with culturally specific or culturally responsive community-based organizations can yield a lot of great results.

Pam: Yeah. And, you know, I will have to say one thing, you know, sometimes people are worried about like, well, you know, you're stealing staff from this person. But I will say that with our community culturally specific partnerships that we have, they are always appreciative of the fact that we are able to offer fulltime regular positions that are often - from that organization might be part time or not 100% full time, every day. And we have not had anybody ever feel slighted because of that. It's actually a really good partnership because we always share our parents with them, and they shared their clients with us. And so, we just work together as a community supporting each other.

Melia: Thank you. And one question that maybe each of you could answer briefly is about incentives. I know that that's often a great way to get incentives. And it sounds like the pizza party was a little bit of an incentive as well. But would you offer incentives for parents to attend

Policy Council meetings, and I guess this could apply to any other activities. And this person says one of our challenges is that if parents are not offered an incentive, they may not attend, and we definitely know that economically our families are struggling and so centers might be even more important than others. So, maybe, Mani and Utica, we can hear from you first and then back to Pam, and we'll just try to briefly answer your - hear your wisdom about this. Mani?

Mani: Oh, here I am. I am reading myself. I just want to say the number one thing that really gets our family to come and participate in a lot of our program events and activities is really providing meals. In our P-3 program, we provide a lot of meals to our families. We provide meals during our parent cafe. We always provide meals during any family engagement activities or events. If it's not a full meal, you know, there are healthy snacks in our Play and Learn Groups that we provide sometimes meals, but majority of the time, you know, coffee for parents and healthy snacks, you know, for everyone. And that is really a great incentive for families when you're asking them to participate or encouraging them to participate in an activity or event that, you know, is happening at night, it's just one less barrier and one less thing for families to worry about, right, having the time to cook dinner. And a lot of times, you know, the families that we serve, they're in what we call title one schools where they are in communities that have free or reduced lunch. And these are the - you know, these are the families that we work within our community. So, meals really has been quite incentive, and not only meals that within the program, we definitely support, you know, school readiness. And so constantly in the P-3 programs, we're providing access to, you know, giving out free books, books that are culture specific to their languages, take home kits and supply so they can continue to do activities that they've learned in groups at home. So, those are some of the things. Is there anything else that you can think of Utica? Utica: No, no, that's about it. Yeah, I think that's committed, food is a big thing, that's normally would when all families and people are together, you know?

Mani: Absolutely.

Melia: And do you do that also during the virtual meetings, like Pam was sharing about the pizza gift certificate? Is that something you're doing for your virtual meeting?

Mani: So, with COVID-19... Oh, go ahead, Utica. Utica: Oh, I was just gonna, you know, share something that you said as well that, during this time, we have provided kits for the parents, so we will go ahead and take their kids for everything that they need to participate in the groups which they absolutely love. They look at that as an incentive because some of our parents don't have newspapers and just crayons and kites and different stuff that they're so appreciative of the simple stuff from the dollar store that we purchased, they loved it. And then we also deliver food boxes to them. And so that there also is a good encouragement for them to come with by my Slavic group because I also have a - one of my culturally specific group is a Slavic team. And then for that team, I provide ... IRCO provide diapers for parents for the young ones. And so, I would say for my program, our parents participate, and they come and they look at those simple stuff that we provide for them as incentives during this time as well.

Melia: Yes, and it sounds like it also just builds that trusting relationship and that the continuing relationship by meeting some of their concrete needs at the same time as continuing that conversation and relationship with the staff. One other person asked about fathers. And I know we are the first in our series of webinars on parents as advocates and leaders focused on fathers but curious if ... And I know that Utica focused on a father volunteer. Pam, is there anything that Head Start now does to recruit and retain fathers either in different cultures or in general?

Pam: So, what we have found the most successful is usually it's one of our father parents that has an interest. One of our fathers was really good at making wood - things working with wood. And so, us by providing the supplies, he actually worked with other fathers to make little wood toys for their children. And in terms of culturally specific activities, we've had a variety of parents that have expressed an interest that they really wanted to have their families participate in and we have supported those kinds of things. And that's been anywhere from having a soccer day where we just put up probably 10 different soccer balls and they worked with kids on soccer to fishing, embroidery and sewing. That's the other thing is that we actually work in a partnership with a church that actually has a classroom that has sewing machines. And one of the things that they are really promoting is people being able to go into do micro businesses using the sewing as a way for them to be able to earn some income. And so, those are some of the examples that we've done.

Melia: That's great. And I just love all of the - that what you're describing what everybody's been describing is how you're really following the parents' need of what they want. And that's the way that you're building the trust. And that's the way you're building the confidence to become advocates and leaders and that enrichment is going both ways. It's helping the families and it's helping your programs. I want to respect everybody's time, and we've just hit that 15 minutes after the hour. So, if all of you online could give us presenters a silent virtual round of applause, I would love for them to feel your love. I am so excited. We have an attendee list of almost 2,000, which is amazing. And so, I'm very, very honored to have had your time and attention. For those of you who are wanting your certificates as soon as we close this webinar, you will see a pop-up window with a link to click to fill out the survey and that will - then you will get your certificate, and if you don't have time to fill it out, don't worry, you will get an email within 24 hours which will have a link to the certificate. Just thank you so much for your time, attention. We'll try to get to other questions that we might not have answered, but we really appreciate all of you and great to have you with us and thank you.