

SUSTAINING AND EMBEDDING PARENT LEADERSHIP AND VOICE



“You have to have that magic mixture of internal and external to get any traction. You need the SPARK and you need the FUEL. Without one, you won’t start the fire, without the other it will burn out too soon. This champion team is literally foundational to sustaining parent leadership as an equity strategy.”

Sarah Zyburt

Critical Partnership: How Champions Work Together for Success

Internal and External Champions provide the building blocks of infrastructure for **SUSTAINABILITY**. The on-going funding and high-quality implementation provide the foundation needed to build capacity so parent leaders and their community partners can generate results that **EMBEDS** the system change work.

While Internal and External Champions have different roles and often operate in different parts of the system, both must be present and working in collaboration and partnership. You need Internal Champions to work **inside the system** to identify and protect funding, establish contract requirements, develop accountability systems, and advocate for parent voice at decision-making tables. Equally important are the External Champions who work **outside the system** to ensure high quality implementation and provides a connecting link between Parent Leaders and the opportunities identified by the Internal Champion.

Additional information about the Internal and External Champion roles can be found in the following resources. It is important to note that for purposes of clarity, these roles are presented as two distinct entities but often Champions may be engaged in several activities from either role.

An Internal Champion is an individual inside an organization who is positioned to advocate for and support the incorporation of authentic family voice in work-streams related to their focus area, working in collaboration with other partners. Their motivation may originate from personal experience in their own life, and/or professional experience where they witnessed first-hand the impact/benefit of authentic parent voice in action.

Responsibilities and Expectations

As an Internal Champion for parent voice, you can expect to:

Develop

- Challenge existing mental models and mindsets of partners and colleagues
- Develop language and descriptors that fit the work
- Learn from others, borrowing shamelessly
- Recognize and create opportunity within funding opportunities - key words, key phrases, linkages
- Create opportunities for parents to be involved

Administer

- Document the work
- Develop and apply compensation policy for parent leaders
- Fund and assure capacity development through External partnership for coaching, training, and staffing for quality implementation
- Facilitate data collection, quality assurance, and quality improvement
- Create accountability within contracts
- Assure contract monitoring is ongoing to ensure accountability
- Incorporate equity requirements within requests for proposals

Sustain

- Become familiar with and utilize frameworks (e.g. Implementation Science) that support the work to continue and support full implementation
- Support consistency in implementation
- Create sustainability and continuity - braid funding, make sure you have at least SOME funding that is ongoing rather than time-limited, ensure diversity of funding streams
- Protect the funding
- Document and codify policies using MOU's and Inter-agency Agreements
- Understand how to write this work into funding opportunities, to show how this work is addressing the goals/requirements
- Open opportunities for parent partners

Grow

- Seek opportunities to spread the work
- Make connections across work-streams/systems
- Be the voice for Parent leadership in other meetings, outside of you immediate work-streams
- Strengthen partnerships with External Champions
- Hire parents, e.g. grow the pool of champions

EXTERNAL CHAMPION

The “How”

An External Champion is an individual outside of an organization who is positioned to advocate for and support the incorporation of authentic family voice, unencumbered by the limitations and constraints that can be faced by the Internal Champion, and working in collaboration with other partners, especially parents and families. The External Champion must have the ability to understand the issues faced by families. They must embody servant leadership. They may have lived experience as a parent advocate themselves. This person is constantly seeking out opportunities to recruit and train additional champions and grow the champion team. Finally, they must have the ability to see and understand how systems work. This individual will need to see the big picture clearly in the collective work. They are the connecting link or liaison.

Expectations for External Champion:

- Advocate for authentic parent voice and leadership
- Challenge models and mindsets
- Remain in consistent communication with parents, internal champions and other stakeholders
- Value cooperation, collaboration and coordination
- High level of passion and motivation

Skills for a Well-Equipped External Champion:

- Ability and courage to openly express ideas
- Attentive listening
- Collaborative leadership
- Community engagement and outreach
- Facilitation skills
- Leadership development knowledge

Ideal Qualities for an External Champion

Approachable	Imaginative	Punctual
Authentic	Independent	Resourceful
Committed	Inquisitive	Respectful
Strong Communicator	Insightful	Responsible
Creative Problem Solver	Intuitive	Tenacious
Dedicated	Open-Minded	Timely
Flexible	Patient	
Focused	Perceptive	
Honest	Persuasive	

External Champions can expect to:

Recruit and partner with families and other partners. Facilitate. Communicate regularly, clearly and on an ongoing basis. Gather and communicate pertinent information. Be responsible for coordinating various tasks and developing strategies for communication, collaboration and engagement. Work with others to set and track goals and outcomes. Identify barriers and work to proactively address and proactively problem-solve. Analyze issues and assess situations for equity.