

**WASHINGTON ALLIANCE FOR BETTER SCHOOLS  
READINESS TO LEARN PROJECT**

**What are Natural Leaders?**

Natural Leaders are multi-cultural families at schools that were identified as warm, caring, social individuals to serve as a bridge between families/community and schools. These families help isolated families connect to schools and therefore, increase family engagement in their children's education.

They are leaders in their community that work as a team with family advocates, family support centers, and school staff to:

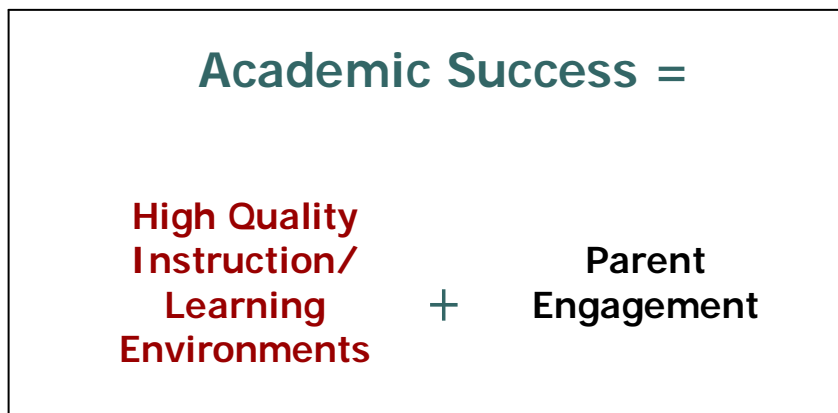
1. Build relationships with families
2. Listen to families ideas on how to help their children be successful in school
3. Bring families and schools together to plan/implement the families ideas

**Why are Natural Leaders Needed?**

Research shows that academic success is related to the quality of instruction/ learning environment, but an equally large part of the success is due to family engagement in their children's education.

Many schools have difficulty building relationships with families that are people of color, English language learners, immigrants, and/or refugees.

Natural Leaders are able to speak their language, understand their culture and past experiences, and provide warm, welcoming arms to their school communities.



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**INCENTIVES FOR SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT A  
NATURAL LEADER PROJECT**

Each Year at 10 schools:

- Over 1,000 multi-cultural families have participated in school events/ multicultural social activities and are sharing their ideas and time to help their children be successful in school
- Families are building social connections and supporting each other. One team of Natural Leaders had a group of Latino parents work with a Tenants Rights Advocacy Group to improve apartment conditions, learning about health care and other resources in their communities, employment opportunities, parenting and child protective issues, and many other issues that are important to families.
- Natural Leaders are working with families and community partners to offer academic enrichment for families: after school learning activities, Latino reading clubs, school break learning camps, college application sessions, pre-school learning activities, ELL classes, Read to Succeed classes, Talk Time with an emphasis on how to help children with math and reading
- Natural Leaders have made engaging presentations to: 350 WABS symposium attendees, 250 Region 2 PTSA Annual Meeting attendees, 100+ Edmonds School District staff and principal meeting, Washington State legislators, OSPI and other conferences
- Natural Leaders are teaching the training curriculum to the new Natural Leaders with our project and other locations in Washington State
- There has been a positive impact on State Academic Achievement scores. While the percentage of ELL children has increased to 8%-36% at schools, and children that are eligible for free and reduced lunch has increased 3.5%, our standardized test scores have also improved. 946 more children passed the Math test, and 1436 more passed the Reading Test. Natural Leader schools went from 46-51% passing the tests, to 64-80% passing the tests.

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**NATURAL LEADERS**

**STEPS TO DEVELOPING THE PROJECT**

1. Identify a group of schools interested in developing the project – that have identified a need to increase parent engagement. Identify an individual to coordinate the project for all the interested schools. The project coordinator should be energetic, enjoy working with people, believe in people’s natural skills and abilities, and be supportive.
2. Look at the research on best practices for Natural Leaders. Determine how your project will implement the critical elements of a natural leader model: clear role definition, recruiting individuals with essential characteristics, training, supervision, teamwork, and compensation.
3. Address issues at schools that could become barriers to the project. Hold open conversations about these beliefs so they don’t undermine the project.
4. Develop a job description for Natural Leaders so the role is clear.
5. Each site forms a team to work with the Natural Leaders. Identify a site coordinator who is energetic, enjoys working with people, believes in people’s natural skills and abilities, and can develop a strong team. The team could include: natural leaders, school family advocate, school nurse, school counselor, community family advocates, family support center staff, early child education family advocates.
6. Each site recruits Natural Leaders:
  - Identify what locations, languages, cultural groups, etc. each school wanted to build better relationships with.
  - Nominate families from many sources (i.e., family advocates, principals, teachers, ELL staff, community partners, other parents, watching families as they come in to school). Focus on parents considered friendly, outgoing and enjoy helping others.
  - Meet with the families -- explain the project to the families – discuss how the research demonstrates that parent engagement is critical to children being successful in school. That many families are not engaged in school because of language and cultural barriers. Natural leaders are needed to help build relationships with more families.
  - Choose the individuals to participate.

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**NATURAL LEADERS**

**STEPS TO DEVELOPING THE PROJECT (CONTINUED)**

7. Develop/implement initial trainings for Natural Leaders/teams at all sites:
  - Emphasize forming a team of parents, getting to know each other, learning about each others cultures, forming a bond together
  - Emphasize natural leader strengths and talents, and demonstrate the leadership talents they have (i.e., warmth, empowering others, organization, enthusiasm, recognizing strengths in others, listening skills)
  - Learn/practice skills (i.e., communication skills, styles of interpersonal interaction, coaching and problem solving skills, confidentiality, boundaries)
  
8. Natural Leaders from all sites continue to meet regularly:
  - Hold sharing meetings to talk about what they are doing, what is working, issues they are facing
  - Continue trainings on topics that the parents choose
  
9. Natural Leaders meet regularly with the team at their site to make plans for their activities. Provide supervision, share ideas, problem-solve, team building exercises as needed, and provide ongoing support to each other.
  
10. Natural Leaders spend time building relationships with families:
  - Natural leaders determine best way to meet families based on cultural preferences (i.e., individual home visits, going door-to-door at apartments, greeting parents at school and after school programs, sponsoring social events at schools, apartments or community locations)
  
11. Natural Leaders work with families to help their children be successful in school:
  - Natural leaders collect families ideas on how school is going for their children, what helps their child be successful in school, and what programs can help them to help their child be successful in school
  - Natural leaders work with the schools and families to offer the programs
  - Natural leaders recruit parent volunteers to help plan and implement the programs
  - Natural leaders work with community coalitions to help strengthen services to families
  - Natural leaders have a pool of funds to implement families ideas

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**NATURAL LEADERS**

**STEPS TO DEVELOPING THE PROJECT (CONTINUED)**

12. Natural leaders will collect information about the successes they are having:
  - Identify how many new families are making connections with schools
  - Gather information about how families interactions with schools are changing
  - Develop a book about themselves, the issues families face and the successes that they and the families they work with are having.
13. Natural leaders help policy makers understand their work and the impact on family engagement/academic success
  - Make presentations to superintendents, school district staff
  - Make presentations to district principals and other leaders
  - Make presentations to legislators and other elected officials
14. Celebrate the successes the team has had. Provide compensation in some form:
  - Monthly stipends
  - Annual party
  - Annual thank you
  - Recognition from district and other officials

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**NATURAL LEADERS**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Family/School Connectors are meant to:

- Help develop community neighborhoods or groups
- Build social connections among families
- Listen to families about schools and their children so schools can have more information about families ideas
- Work with families and schools to offer activities that will help their children be successful in school

Family/School Connectors are not:

- Solving family issues – they refer to advocates or community partners for this
- Solving school issues that families might have – they pass on information to school family support teams (of which they are a member)

Family/School Connectors should:

- Be a social, friendly individual who likes meeting/talking with other people
- Be individuals who are reflective of the families schools want to reach out to (i.e., they should be of same culture, ethnic background, religion, live in same neighborhoods)
- Provide school outreach/be welcome wagon to families in community settings
- Spend social time talking to families to build relationships with each family and among families.
- Learn more about families by asking open-ended questions like: 1) how is school going for their child and them, 2) what their talents/skills and interest are, and, 3) what type of events/activities/programs they think would help their child(ren) be successful in school.
- Provide regular updates to the Natural Leader coordinator at each site to let them know what families they have been meeting with/what families have been telling them. Whenever possible, participate in school Family Support Team meetings.
- Work with families, family advocates, community partners, and school staff to set up events that families have told them they want, make personal invitations to families to attend, and participate in the events
- Attend skills trainings on topics such as family support principles, listening/communication skills, confidentiality, boundary setting, respect for cultures, and team building.

Family/School Connectors should not:

- Offer existing school sponsored programs unless families ask for the program
- Determine activities to offer solely based on their knowledge of their community or what they think families need

# WASHINGTON ALLIANCE FOR BETTER SCHOOLS READINESS TO LEARN PROJECT



## Family/School Connectors

Are leaders in their community. They work as a team with other family/school connectors, family advocates, family support center staff, and school staff to:

1. Build relationships/connections with families
2. Listen to families ideas on how to help their children be successful in school
3. Bring families and schools together to plan/implement the families ideas.

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**Exercise 1:**  
**Strengths and Talents**

1. Get together with your team. Have someone go first.
2. Have that person start. Take 5 minutes to tell a story about something:
  - you feel you did well
  - you did that you are proud of

Be specific and tell the details of what you did and what you got done.

Team members can ask questions like "*what did you do*" or "*how did you do that*", but don't ask "*why did you do that*".

3. When you finish your story, take 5 minutes for the rest of your team to tell you what talents and strengths they think you used. Have one person make a list of your strengths to give to you.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the next person on your team.

Name:

Strengths and talents you used:

Adapted from the Bernard Haldane, Ph.D. Dependable Strengths Articulation Process.

## Leaders Listen and Coach Others

- Leaders spend most of their time listening
- Leaders avoid giving advice to others
- Leaders recognize that "*Ideas are like babies. We like our own the best. People are more likely to take action if they come up with their own ideas*"
- Leaders serve as coaches by helping people explore their own solutions

## Leaders/Coaches Spend Time Getting More Information

There are 2 ways for leaders to gain more information

### Use Questions

1. What do you think would help?
2. What do you think would work
3. What do you want to do?
4. What does that mean to you?
5. How does this affect you?

### Use Comments

1. Tell me what works best....
2. Tell me more about it...
3. Tell me what you would like to do...

### **Remember:**

It often takes time for people to answer... they need time to think. Silence can be uncomfortable, but avoid the urge to talk. Silence will encourage the other person to talk.

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**Exercise 3: Coaching Others**

1. Find a partner.
2. One person chooses a dilemma that they or another person they know has. Describe the dilemma to your partner.
3. The other person acts as a coach. You use questions or comments to get more information. The coach tries to get their partner to solve their own dilemma. The coach needs to avoid giving advice or suggestions.
4. Swap roles – so each person gets a turn to be the coach.

For More information on the Natural Leader Project, contact:

Jonelle Adams  
Washington Alliance for Better Schools  
[jadams@nsd.org](mailto:jadams@nsd.org)  
425-408-7957

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4. What cultural or fun activities do the families at your school enjoy? What activities are you planning to offer?

5. What topics have families told you they are interested in talking/learning about? What activities are you planning to offer?

6. What academic needs do the students at your school have? What types of activities are you considering to help meet these needs?

## Session One Natural Leaders Training

# Agenda

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Getting to Know Each Other</b>	<b>Pages 3-4</b>	<b>45 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Exercise 1 – make flip charts to introduce your team</li></ul> <b>30 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Introduce your team</li></ul>
<b>What Good Leaders Do</b>	<b>Pages 4-11</b>	<b>45 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Suggestions from trainers</li><li>▪ Exercise 2 – share your strengths and talents</li></ul>
<b>Using Encouragement Language</b>	<b>Pages 12-13</b>	<b>25 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Suggestions from trainers</li><li>▪ Exercise 3 – practice encouragement language</li></ul>
<b>Homework and Evaluation</b>	<b>Page 14-15</b>	<b>5 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Homework explanation</li><li>▪ Fill out evaluation</li></ul>

## **Training Rules and Agreements:**

- We listen when others are talking
- One person talks at a time
- All opinions are honored
- Everyone is respected
- Speak for yourself
- You don't have to talk if you don't want to
- Keep personal things confidential
- Humor is helpful
- Others:

# Exercise 1: Getting to Know Each Other

Get together with your team. On one flip chart page, tell us about your team members:

Your school name/district	
Your names:	The countries you come from:
The number of children your team has that are:  Younger than school age _____  In elementary school _____  In middle School _____  In high School _____  Older than school age _____	Your families' favorite holidays:

# Exercise 1:

## Getting to Know Each Other

Now use a second flip chart page to describe your communities' strengths and talents. Use pictures or words...

The strengths and talents of our community are:

## **We Are Natural Leaders Because We:**

- **Are warm and caring**
- **Enjoy meeting with other families**
- **Are hard workers**
- **Want all children to succeed in school**
- **Want our children to have a good future**
- **Know we can make a difference in kids' lives**
- **Know that some kids and families need encouragement to get involved with school**
- **Know that we can help schools and families work together in partnership**

## **QUALITIES FOUND IN EFFECTIVE LEADERS**

Leaders each have their own style of facilitation and each group has different needs.

The leader's role is to create and maintain a positive environment in which communication can take place. The following four qualities help do that:

### **WARMTH**

Effective leaders:

- speak well of people
- trust rather than fear other people
- establish warm relationships with people

### **INDIRECTNESS**

Effective leaders:

- let people learn things for themselves
- refrain from telling people how to do things

### **ORGANIZATION**

Effective leaders:

- have a clear focus in mind
- they get agreement on what the group's goals are
- let other people choose how to get the work done, but help coordinate their efforts

### **ENTHUSIASM**

Effective leaders:

- feel enthusiastic about people
- are enthusiastic about the purpose of the group

The combination of these qualities is a powerful force for leadership. The warmth gives people permission to participate; the indirectness offers people the protection they need; and the organization and enthusiasm are reflections of positive leadership.

## ESTABLISHING TRUST

Everyone must feel accepted. The parent leader can create an accepting atmosphere, emphasizing the fact that problems are a normal part of the process. Adult learning is ongoing, and we can practice and acquire skills at any time. The leader assures that all participants have the opportunity to share ideas, opinions and values without fear of criticism. This is easily accomplished by using Ground Rules so all participants are aware of their responsibilities. It is the job of the leader to make sure the Ground Rules are followed.

## SHOWING ENCOURAGEMENT

The parent leader can show encouragement by praising and complimenting as often as possible what is said and done. Establishing a supportive atmosphere helps participants feel more open to discuss their concerns and share their ideas. By setting the example, the leader teaches others to encourage and support all participants.

## RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS

It is important to recognize the strengths of others. Individuals have their strengths and their weaknesses. Personalities within the community/school have an impact on the collective group behavior. Notice individual strengths and recognize them whenever possible. Some people tend to "put themselves down" and dwell on their weaknesses. Reinforce often the positive qualities of people in the community/school.

## UNDERSTANDING BODY LANGUAGE

Body language, gestures, and facial expressions often speak louder than words. It is thought that perhaps 70% of our communication is expressed non-verbally. It is important for a leader to be able to recognize positive and negative body language.

All people display body language at one time or another that alerts an observer that we might be saying one thing with our words, while we are thinking or feeling something quite different. Picture a person sitting back with arms folded across the chest, looking away from the speaker. The speaker intuitively knows this person is probably withdrawn and not actively listening. Such a conclusion may be accurate, however, it is important to remember that some behaviors appear to be negative, but in fact may not be. For example, the person leaning back in the chair with arms crossed may simply feel comfortable and still be listening well to what is being discussed in the group. It is always important to look for positive signs people may be showing, such as eye contact and facial expressions.

## WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES

Most adults come to a learning experience with a positive, respectful attitude and creative ideas. People usually want to be helpful rather than disruptive in the learning process. However, all people are different, and depending on the group, some personalities may have a negative effect. It is valuable for leaders to be able to recognize individual personalities within a group in order to maintain a positive learning atmosphere.

## **WHAT GOOD LEADERS DO:**

### **1. Challenge the process**

Improving the quality of life for children and families in your community means making change. Change involves taking risks and finding new ways of doing things. As community leaders, you may need to challenge old thinking and to be innovative in making the community a better place to live.

### **2. Inspire a shared Vision**

The first step to building a better community is finding a common vision that professionals and citizens can work toward together. Leaders bring together partners who decide what they want their community to look like in the future and how they will proceed to make it happen.

### **3. Enable Others to Act**

Community leaders build trust among groups in the community to foster collaboration. They create systems and processes in which power is shared, and develop the leadership capacity of other youth and adults.

### **4. Model the Way**

Visions are abstract, but actions are tangible. Community leaders are role models that move others to new ways of doing things by setting an example. They tell stories, take opportunities to teach, and recognize progress as ways of maintaining the momentum of community collaborations for change.

### **5. Encourage the Heart**

Community change requires hard work and persistence. Many participants are volunteers whose only reward is recognition. Leaders make sure that the contributions of individuals involved in community projects are recognized both publicly and privately. In addition, they honor the work of collaborators by finding ways to celebrate shared accomplishments on a regular basis.

\*Adapted from Kouzes and Posner's Five Fundamental Practices of Leadership

## Authentic Leadership

Both leaders and group members influence an organization by their behavior.

Authentic leadership happens when people are open and honest.

<b><u>Authentic Leaders</u></b>	<b><u>Inauthentic Leaders</u></b>
Do what they say they would do (i.e. “practice what they preach”)	Say one thing, but do another
Make mistakes and admit to them	Make mistakes, but blame others to save own necks
Recognize that rules sometimes need to be changed	Will only follow the rules. They do everything “by the book”
See themselves as a facilitator, and let others take turns leading the group.	Need to be in control and the leader at all times.
Let people find their own solutions, and let them find their own ways to do things.	Find solutions for others and tell them what to do.

### What happens when you have authentic leadership:

- People trust and respect each other
- Staff are happier with their jobs and place of work
- Organizations get more high quality work done
- Managers do a better job
- Leaders get more done

Adapted from Henderson, J.E. & Brookhart, S.M. (1996). “Leader Authenticity: Key to organizational climate, health and perceived leader effectiveness.” The Journal of Leadership Studies, 3, 87-103.

## What Kind of FOLLOWER Are You?

**The Alienated Follower:** critical and independent in thinking, but passive in duties. Can affect organization positively, because they think for themselves and often stand up for others. On the negative side, seen as troublesome, headstrong, and as rebels without a cause. Usually don't support leader.

**The Conformist Follower (Yes People):** dependent and seldom challenge the leader. On positive side, are team players, accept work assignments, and are committed to the organization. Negatives are that they lack own ideas and are unlikely to take needed but unpopular positions.

**The Pragmatic Follower (Survivors):** adapt to situations, stay out of trouble and try to survive. Positives are that they get things done, keep things in perspective, and play by the rules. Negatives are that they tend to play political games and pursue their own self-interests above the common good.

**The Passive Follower (Sheep):** look to the leader to do their thinking, need constant attention, and take little initiative. Is a product of the organizational environment, rather than having a personality flaw preventing more effective participation.

**The Effective Follower:** think for themselves and are active organizational players. Are enthusiastic, energetic, and seen by others as risk takers and problem solvers. Innovative, assertive and willing to stand up to leader when needed. They assume ownership, are self-starters, and use their talents to benefit the organization.

Adapted from Kelley, R. (1992). The Power of Followership. New York: Doubleday.

### Five Dimensions of Courageous Followership (Chaleff, 1995)

- **The courage to assume responsibility.** Do not wait for the leader to tell them what to do. Accept ownership and actively pursue the goals of the organization.
- **The courage to serve.** Willing to work hard and serve organizational leaders. Accept new and challenging responsibilities for the purpose of benefiting the organization.
- **The courage to challenge.** Willing to voice discontent when they believe things are not right. Will "stand up, stand out, risk rejection, and initiate conflict" when actions of leader or organization are inappropriate.
- **The courage to participate in transformation.** Pursue organizational transformation. Willing to overcome resistance and struggle through change.
- **The courage to leave.** Recognize when the leader's actions and goals of organization no longer match the follower's individual principles. Willing to withdraw to benefit both parties.

## Exercise 2: Your Strengths and Talents

1. Get together with your team. Have someone go first.
2. Have that person start. Take 5 minutes to tell a story about something:
  - you feel you did well
  - you did that you are proud of

Be specific and tell the details of what you did and what you got done.

Team members can ask questions like “*what did you do*” or “*how did you do that*”, but don’t ask “*why did you do that*”.

3. When you finish your story, take 5 minutes for the rest of your team to tell you what talents and strengths they think you used. Have one person make a list of your strengths to give to you.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the next person on your team.

Name:

Strengths and talents you used:

## Leaders Use “Encouragement” Language

Leaders recognize that everyone has assets and strengths. Encouragement makes people want to give more of their strengths to the community.

When using encouragement language, do more than say “Great Job!”

Be specific, tell people in detail what you like about their work.

### Types of Encouragement Language:

#### **Phrases that show acceptance:**

1. “I like the way you handled that, because \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. “It looks as if you enjoyed that, because I see \_\_\_\_\_.”

#### **Phrases that show you have confidence in a person:**

1. “I know you will do fine because \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. “I have confidence in you because \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. “I know you can figure that out because \_\_\_\_\_.”

#### **Phrases that focus on how people have helped out:**

1. “Thanks that helped a lot, by \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. “It was thoughtful of you to \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. “Thanks, I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ because it makes my job so much easier by \_\_\_\_\_.”

#### **Phrases that recognize effort and improvement**

1. “It looks like you really worked hard on that, because I see \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. “It looks like you spent a lot of time thinking that through. It shows because \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. “Look at the progress you’ve made. I see that you \_\_\_\_\_.”

**\*Adapted from “The Parents Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting”**

### **Exercise 3:**

## **Spend some time giving encouragement and practicing how to accept encouragement**

1. Find a partner
2. Have each person take a turn giving the other person encouragement or a compliment. Think about something that person has done or said tonight. Give specific details about what you like about what they did or said.

For example, *“I admire how you spoke in such a strong, confident voice. There are so many people here tonight, but it seemed so easy for you to do.”*

3. Have the other person practice saying, “thank you”, and accepting the compliment in a positive way.

For example, *“Thanks, I appreciate your comment about my speaking in a strong voice when I am in a new situation.”*

Don't say, *“Oh that was nothing”* or *“anyone could do that”*, or *“that is no big deal”*, or *“usually I do a terrible job”*



## Natural Leader Training Evaluation Session 1

### 1. What did you like about the training?

### 2. What would you change?

### 3. Any suggestions for the next training?

## Session Two Natural Leader Training

# Agenda

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Sharing Homework</b>	<b>Pages 3-4</b>	<b>45 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Make a flip chart of the main points you learned from the homework</b></li></ul> <b>10 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Exercise 1: Teams share their flip charts</b></li></ul>
<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>Pages 4-11</b>	<b>10 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Exercise 2: Operator game</b></li></ul> <b>35 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Exercise 3 : Coaching others</b></li></ul>
<b>Respecting Culture</b>	<b>Pages 12-13</b>	<b>30 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Exercise 4: Sharing about culture</b></li></ul>
<b>Boundaries and Confidential Information</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>10 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Discussion</b></li></ul>
<b>Creating a Vision and Goals</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>30 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Exercise 5 – Developing a plan for your team</b></li></ul>
<b>Homework and Evaluation</b>	<b>Page 14-15</b>	<b>10 minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Homework explanation</b></li><li>▪ <b>Fill out evaluation</b></li></ul>

# Exercise 1: Sharing What We Learned From the Homework

**Get together with your team. On one flip chart page, tell us what your team members learned from the homework:**

Your school name/district	
<p>What did you learn from sharing stories/identifying strengths each other has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li></ul>	<p>What did you learn by using encouragement language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li></ul>

## Communication – Talking and Listening to Others

### Communication is when:

- Two people talk with each other
- The first person starts by speaking words that describe a thought or idea to the other person
- The second person listens
- The second person then restates what they heard to be sure they understand what was told to them
- The first person then confirms that they heard it right, or provides additional information to clarify

### Important Aspects of Communication

#### 1.) Listening:

- Listen for feelings and underlying message
- Restate what you heard
- Put words to the feelings
- Clarify – ask questions to gather relevant background
- Get and give feedback:
  - a. Check your own perception and interpretation. Did I understand you?
  - b. Share your own thoughts, feelings, and experience
- Try to understand others first before you seek to be understood.
  - a. Tell the other person that you want to know and understand what they are telling you.
  - b. Tell the other person it is important to share with each other

#### 2.) Body language:

- What message are we sending with our gestures (face, arms, legs, body position...)
- Maintain appropriate eye contact – note cultural differences
- Lean slightly forward
- Reinforce speaker by nodding
- Actively move away from distractions
- Non-verbal cues are consistent with tone and content of what is shared
- Respect boundaries: stand at a comfortable distance or closeness
- What message are we sending with our gestures (facial, arms, legs...)

#### 3.) Tone of Voice:

- Can be a communication blocker if tone is not friendly
- Does the tone match the words you are using?
- Does the tone encourage open communication and respect?

## Things That Impact What We Say and Hear

- Our values and beliefs
- Our culture
- The space we are talking in (such as noise that could distract us)
- Stresses in our lives that affect our concentration

## Please Just Listen

I want you to listen,

If you give me advice, I don't feel heard

If you tell me I shouldn't feel that way, my feelings get hurt

If you try to solve my problems, then I feel my strengths are not being used

If you do things for me, I feel inadequate

So please just listen and hear me. And if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn,

And I'll listen to you.

Paraphrased from:  
Ray Houghton, M.D.  
Berkeley, CA

## Leaders Listen and Coach Others

- Leaders spend most of their time listening
- Leaders avoid giving advice to others
- Leaders recognize that *“Ideas are like babies. We like our own the best. People are more likely to take action if they come up with their own ideas”*
- Leaders serve as coaches by helping people explore their own solutions

## Leaders/Coaches Spend Time Getting More Information

**There are 2 ways for leaders to gain more information**

### Use Questions

1. What do you think would help?
2. What do you think would work
3. What do you want to do?
4. What does that mean to you?
5. How does this affect you?

### Use Comments

1. Tell me what works best....
2. Tell me more about it...
3. Tell me what you would like to do...

**Remember:** It often takes time for people to answer... they need time to think. Silence can be uncomfortable, but avoid the urge to talk. Silence will encourage the other person to talk.

## **Exercise 2: Operator Game**

1. Have your team sit in a circle.
2. One person will start by reading the sentence on the piece of paper you are given by the teachers. Read it quietly in the ear of the person next to you. Read it slowly and clearly. Read it one time only.
3. Then the second person repeats the sentence they just heard to the next person. Keep repeating this with the rest of your team.
4. When you get to the end, have the last person say the sentence they were told out loud.
5. How does this compare to the sentence you started with? What does this tell us?

## **Exercise 3: Coaching Others**

1. Find a partner.
2. One person chooses a dilemma that they or another person they know has. Describe the dilemma to your partner.
3. The other person acts as a coach. You use questions or comments to get more information. The coach tries to get their partner to solve their own dilemma. The coach needs to avoid giving advice or suggestions.
4. Swap roles – so each person gets a turn to be the coach.

## Culture

It has long been recognized that culture influences how people present themselves, understand the world, and interpret experiences. Culture also affects our learning experiences.

Rules about communicating, how we display respect, and other patterns of social interaction vary widely across cultures.

- Different cultural groups are comfortable with differing amounts of conversation and, with silence. In some cultures, individuals who talk a lot are considered smart; in others, silent thinkers are.
- Eye contact means different things in different cultures. In some, direct eye contact is respectful, while in others it is rude.
- How close you stand also varies in different cultures. In some standing very close is common, while it would be uncomfortable to be so close in other cultures.
- How much personal information is shared. In some cultures, personal information is shared with family only and is considered nosy or rude to talk about these things with others.
- Adults expect children to be active partners during conversations in some cultures; while in others, children are quiet observers.
- In some cultures, information is passed on through shared activity or storytelling, while in others, it is shared with lessons or explanations.
- The acceptance of interruptions also vary across cultures. In some, frequent interruptions are expected as part of active participating in a conversation. In others, long pauses between talking are typical and respectful.

It is important that we understand our own culture and how that influences us.

We also need to understand the values of different cultures and respect those values when communicating.





## Natural Leaders Family/School Connectors Job Description

Are leaders in their community. They work as a team with other family/school connectors, family advocates, family support center staff, and school staff to:

1. Build relationships/connections with families
2. Listen to families ideas on how to help their children be successful in school
3. Bring families and schools together to plan/implement the

## **NATURAL LEADERS VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION**

### Natural Leaders are volunteers meant to:

- Help develop community neighborhoods or groups
- Build social connections among families
- Listen to families about schools and their children so schools can have more information about families ideas
- Work with families and schools to offer activities that will help their children be successful in school

### Natural Leaders are not:

- Solving family issues – they refer to advocates or community partners for this
- Solving school issues that families might have – they pass on information to school family support teams (of which they are a member)

### Natural Leaders volunteers should:

- Be a social, friendly individual who likes meeting/talking with other people
- Be individuals who are reflective of the families schools want to reach out to (i.e., they should be of same culture, ethnic background, religion, live in same neighborhoods)
- Provide school outreach/be welcome wagon to families in community settings
- Spend social time talking to families to build relationships with each family and among families.
- Learn more about families by asking open-ended questions like: 1) how is school going for their child and them, 2) what their talents/skills and interest are, and, 3) what type of events/activities/programs they think would help their child(ren) be successful in school.
- Should be a coach to other families – listening and getting them to come up with ideas that will work for them
- Provide regular updates to the Natural Leader coordinator at each site to let them know what families they have been meeting with/what families have been telling them. Whenever possible, participate in school Family Support Team meetings.
- Work with families, family advocates, community partners, and school staff to set up events that families have told them they want, make personal invitations to families to attend, and participate in the events
- Attend skills trainings on topics such as family support principles, listening/communication skills, confidentiality, boundary setting, respect for cultures, and team building.

## **NATURAL LEADERS** **WHAT SHOULD I DO EACH MONTH?**

What is the stipend I get paid for being a Natural Leader?

Each month you'll get \$65 in check for 9 months.

How many hours do I work:

10 hours per month

What do I do for those 10 hours?

1. Go to trainings/sharing meetings with other schools for 2-3 hours per month
2. Meet with your school team for 2-3 hours per month
3. Spend the remaining 4-6 hours:
  - Meet families
  - Organize social events
  - Listen to how school is going for families and their child
  - Get families' ideas on how to help their children in school
  - Help families put their ideas into action
  - Translate written materials for the school
  - Translate for families

## **Boundaries**

1. Follow the Job Description
2. Recognize your own values and attitudes
3. Be open to other values and attitudes
4. Know your role as a Natural Leader.  
Be able to articulate that role with parents
5. Know your limits both personally and as a Natural Leader.  
You can't be all things to all people.

## **Confidentiality Guidelines**

1. Limit the information shared to what is essential for the specific situation involved. Always filter sharing any information about another through **“Needs To Know”**. What and who, if anyone, needs to know this information? Ask yourself, “Why am I sharing this?”
2. Share confidentiality policy of school with the family. Avoid giving the family the impression that absolutely no information will ever be shared with others. Always obtain their permission prior to sharing with another. (An exception would be life-threatening situations.)
3. You must follow the mandated reporting laws of the State of Washington regarding Abuse and Neglect. Each school will have an established process for you to become familiar.

Source: Adapted from Wasik, Barbara Hanna, Bryant, Donna M. Bryant, 2001, Home Visiting, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications

## Creating a vision and goal with your school group

Before groups start working together it is good to spend some time talking about your dreams -- what you want to achieve together.

That way we are all working together, for the same purpose.

There are 4 things to talk about with your team:

- **Vision** – what is your dream for the education of your children, families, school, and community
- **Community Trends** – what is changing in your community and school? what is changing for families and children?
- **Your Strategy** – what are some things that your team can do?

## **WHAT OTHER NATURAL LEADER TEAMS HAVE DONE TO MEET FAMILIES**

- Hung up a poster with pictures of themselves in the front of the school building
- Sent a letter home introducing themselves
- Made matching t-shirts so they can be easily identified at school events
- Gone door to door in apartment complexes and introduced themselves
- Call families and talk to them
- Go to homes and visit families
- Send home hand-written notes to families
- Started phone lines at schools in other languages
- Natural Leaders return phone calls to parents that call the phone line
- Invited people to pot-lucks
- Invited people to cultural events (i.e., el dia del niño)
- Invited people to principal lunch or breakfasts
- Invited people to volunteer at school projects
- Sponsored a language exchange day on Saturdays with school staff and families
- Sponsored a pre-school literacy program
- Sponsored school break learning camps
- Created multi-cultural libraries in schools, apartment complexes and community centers
- Have weekly mother groups to share and volunteer at school
- Sponsored after school learning clubs
- Sponsored ELL classes
- Sponsored other activities that families asked for
- Sponsored celebrations of student successes
- Sponsored celebrations of family participation in their children's education



## Exercise 5: Creating a Vision and Goal Statement

1. What is your team's vision – what is your dream for the education for your children, families, school, and community.

***Our vision is:***

2. What are the community trends? What is changing in your community and school? What is changing for families and children?

***Community trends are:***

3. What is your strategy? What are some things your team can do:

***Our strategy is:***

## Homework:

1. Meet with your team. Identify parents you want to talk to. Talk about how to find parents that are not connected to school now.
2. Start meeting 2-3 new parents. (Each parent natural leader should try to meet 5-6 new families by then end of February and 10-15 by then end of the school year.) Ask the following questions:
  - Start by introducing yourself and explain what Natural Leaders are

*“Hi, I am a Natural Leader at \_\_\_\_\_ School. The Natural Leader Program is a new program that reaches out to parents/. Research shows that when parents are involved in school, their kids do better in school. We want to help all kids in our school succeed. I am meeting families, and listening to their ideas. Then we can work with the school to do things that we think would help our kids. I would like to hear your ideas.”*

- Get to know the other families
- Ask what social events they enjoy and would like to have at the school
- Once you know each other more, ask some questions about school:
  - How is school for your child?
  - What helps your child be successful in school?
  - What activities would they like to have for families that would help their child be successful in school.
  - What talents and strengths could they share with children, families or the school?

Share what you are learning from parents with your team and other school teams at the next sharing meeting with all the Natural Leaders.

## **Natural Leader Training Evaluation Session 2**

### **1. What did you like about the training?**

### **2. What would you change?**

### **3. Any suggestions for the next training?**