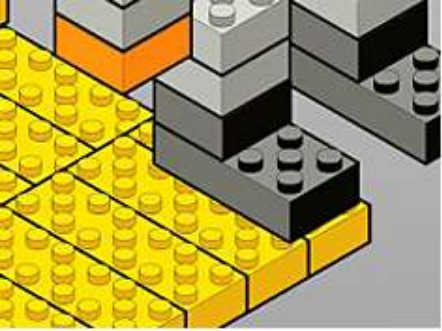




Building Parent Leadership

PEAK Parent Center





ABC's Of Parent Leadership Course



What is Parent Leadership?

- Families of children with special needs often recognize that in order to be successful parents and advocates for their children, they need to embrace leadership roles.
- Because every family is unique, parent leadership is also unique.
- Parent leadership looks different at different points in their child's life.



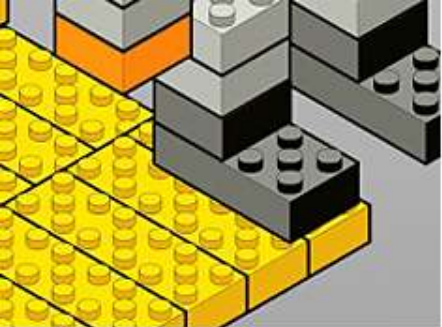
What is Parent Leadership?

- Parent leaders recognize that parents are their children's best resources, that no one loves their children the way that they do, and that parents are their child's strongest advocates and decision makers until the child can assume this responsibility.
- Parent leaders place a high value on building and strengthening communities.



What is Parent Leadership?

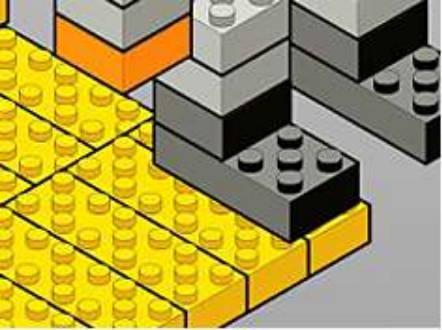
- Parent leaders work on many different levels.
- Parents might express their leadership by:
 - advocating for one's own child and family;
 - being available to provide support to other parents and families;
 - working on broader levels on behalf of all children and families in a community, in a region, in a state, throughout the country or the world.



Who is a Parent Leader?

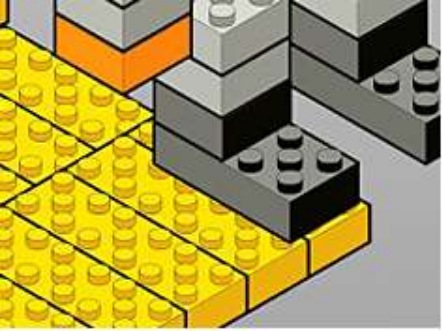
“ They are parents who take active roles to better their family or community, who use their skills to serve in meaningful leadership roles and who represent the “parent voice” to help shape the direction of **families, programs** or **communities**.-They’re all around us! ”

Diane Autin



How Do Parents Learn to Be Leaders?

- There is no guidebook for parents of children with special needs to learn how to be leaders.
- Parents have observed that they learn leadership skills through a variety of ways.
 - Through their children
 - From others
 - Volunteering
 - By getting involved in systems level change efforts
 - Through invitations and opportunities



Building New Leadership

- Nurture leadership
- Have a plan to:
 - Identify and recruit potential leaders
 - Build capacity
 - Allow mistakes
 - Provide support
 - Listen, respond



Leadership Lesson from Legos®

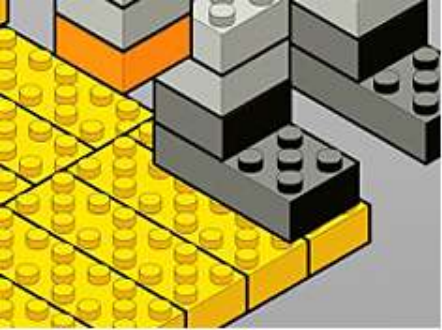
LEGO bricks don't join with others simply by chance. Likewise, the best connections don't happen by accident. Pouring out a box of LEGO bricks will not produce a castle; you will just have a pile of bricks. Similarly, relationships at their best are designed, intentional, connected, and built.

Successful leadership requires the ability to connect.



How Does it Work?

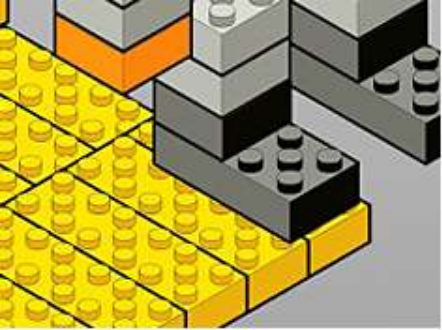
- A course offered in two parts: 2 days with an overnight and then 1 day a month later
- Parents apply and commit to participation in all 3 days
- Peer-to-peer mentoring with experienced parent trainers as guides
- Small stipend provided to cover childcare and travel costs
- Follow-up listserv and support in actualizing personal leadership plan



Course at a Glance

Day 1

- Illustrate personal milestones using a life map
- Identify essential leadership skills
- Explore individual communication styles
- Share family symbols



Course at a Glance

Day 2

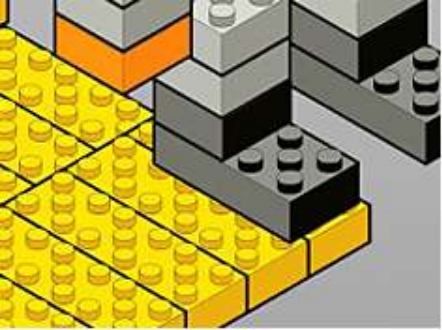
- Explore experiences in various life roles
- Identify one's support systems
- Identify and practice specific communication skills
- Learn best practice information on parents rights and responsibilities
- Set personal leaderships goals
- Clarify assignment for next month



Course at a Glance

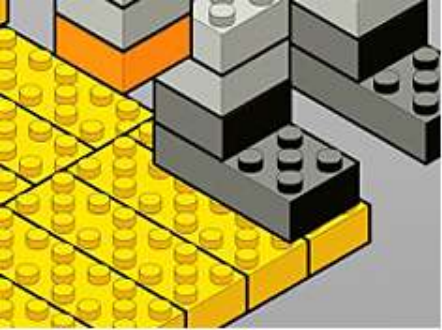
Day 3

- Update on leadership goal progress
- Gain knowledge of problem-solving steps
- Learn collaboration strategies
- Discuss team building processes
- Put course pieces together and share individual plans with the group
- Discuss strategies for personal renewal
- Celebrate!



Key Activity: Life Maps

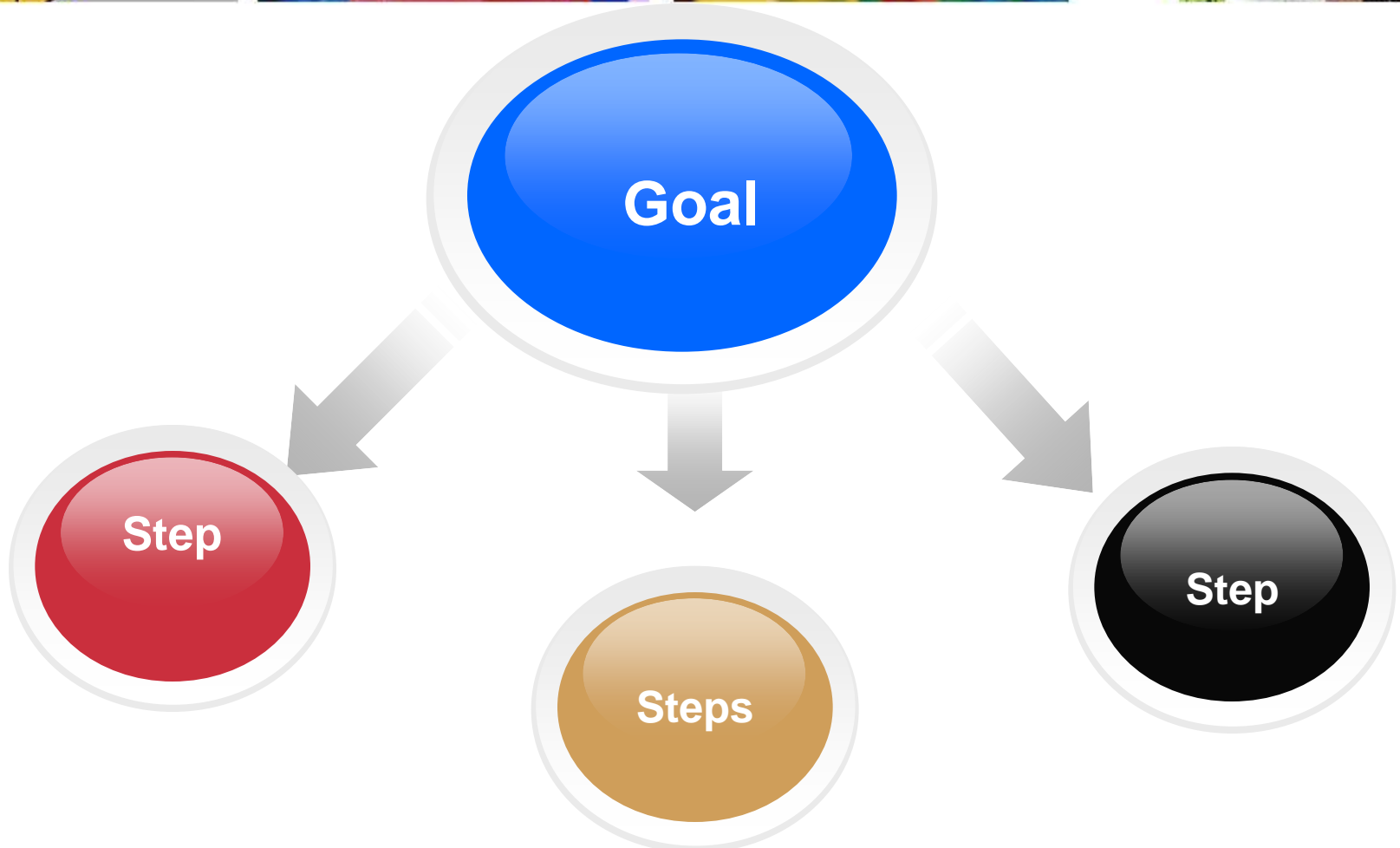
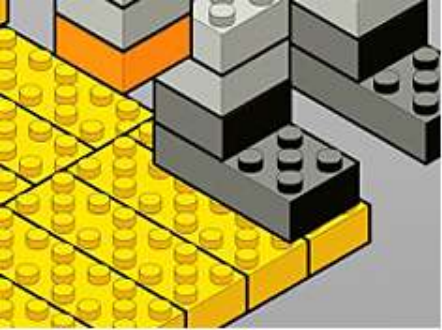




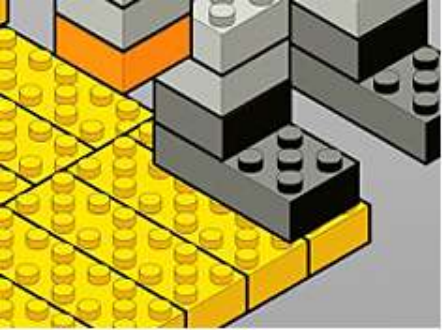
Key Activity: What is a Vision?



- A personal statement
- Builds on experiences, skills, & values
- Gives direction & purpose
- Reflects long-range hopes
- May begin as an effort to improve life for family members, but will likely improve life for others, too
- An opportunity to think deeply about priorities, values, & choices



Key Activity: Leadership Goal



Goals-Set and Met:

Jessica - Rifle

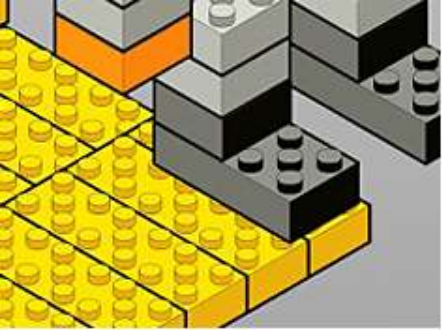
Set up a program with doctors' offices to provide support to parents in a rural area of Colorado.

Roxanne - Delta

Set up a 501c(3) support group that is now sponsoring trainings and fundraising events.

Claudette - Castle Rock

Took idea of parent resource notebook to school board and was awarded funding to provide the notebooks to families.



Goals-Set and Met:

Kylie - Colorado Springs

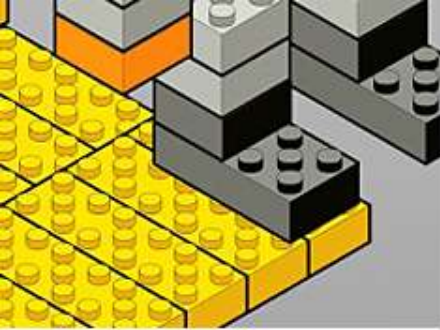
Work with hospital to provide support for families who have oral facial cleft support needs.

Chresta – Ft. Collins

Set up private fundraising organization to provide funding to families with children with rare disorders.

Jim - Ft. Collins

Video resource for families in Colorado. Made sample DVD for follow-up meeting.



Goals-Set and Met:

Valerie - Pueblo

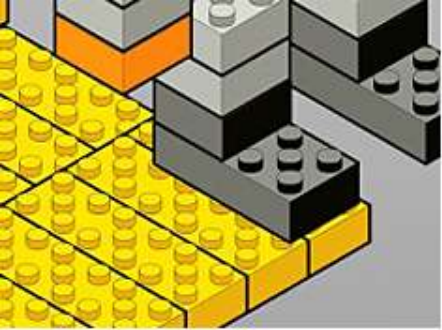
Cookbook for fundraising for her local support group with family stories on pages. Had sample available for follow up meeting.

Darlene - Denver

Talking to students at her son's school about her son's disability. A very big step for her!

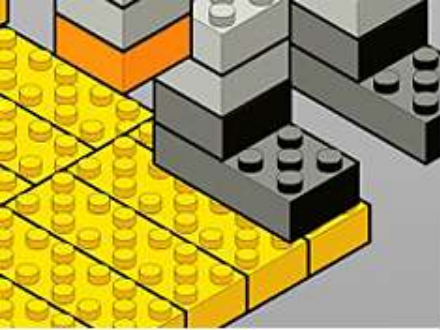
Leland - Denver

Presenting at Six Flags about working with employees and customers with disabilities.



Strategies for Sustaining Leadership

- Find an experienced family member or provider to mentor
- Stay in touch with other families
- Involve other parents to ease the burden of representing the consumer perspective
- Have patience, courage, and a sense of humor



Strategies for Sustaining Leadership

- Evaluate goals and priorities frequently
 - Are you meeting them?
 - Is the time you're investing making a difference?
- Put your family first
 - Apply the 20-year-rule: Will this have mattered to my family twenty years from now?



Where are they now?

- Director of the CPRC in Denver
- Past co-chairs of our state ICC
- Members of our state ICC
- Members of Special Quest State Team
- Spanish outreach coordinator for Down Syndrome Association
- Teaching an in-depth parent leadership course
- And much, much more!



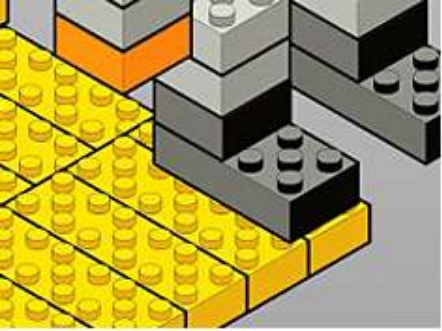
Lessons Learned

- Parents bring incredible resources to contribute
- Parents will lead with encouragement and opportunities
- Parents need many ways to contribute
- Parents will drive their leadership
- Peer-to-peer model is a key ingredient



“This training has been life changing for me. I’d recommend it to all parents. I learned so much about myself and was inspired by all the parents who participated.”

—Colorado parent



“It was so empowering to me! Exciting to meet others and to share stories and concerns. It was so much fun!”

“I am motivated to take the first steps to reach my goal.”



**For more information, please
contact us at:**



1-800-284-0251

719-531-9400

www.peakparent



Thank You!

