

Powered By Families

Co-Creating Professional Learning Through Family Engagement Summits

Global Family Research Project

In collaboration with:





From the Authors

Dear Reader,

Over the past 20 years, our team at Global Family Research Project has worked to develop the capacity of families and educators to share responsibility for children's learning through problem solving, reflection, and perspective taking. One of our team members—Margaret Caspe—was invited to participate and present at the Family Engagement Summit you will read about in this report. She was deeply inspired by the event and the many opportunities it afforded families and educators to collaborate intentionally and co-create solutions that mattered for each team's community.

We hope you will be just as inspired by this work, and try out this model of professional learning and capacity building for yourself.

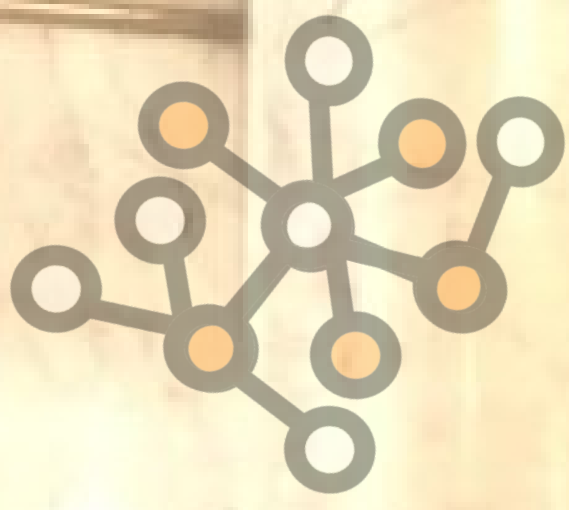
[Global Family Research Project](#)



CONTENT

The Challenge	03
The Opportunity	04
The Process	
The Recruitment Process	05
Summit Teams At A Glance	06
The Logic Model Development and Planning Process	07
Networking and Peer Learning	08
External Feedback and Guidance	09
The Potential of "Powered By"	10
Voices from the Summit	11
Reflections on Powered By Teach to Lead	12
PAVE: Reformulating State Report Cards for Families	13
West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning Initiative (AFEL): Creating a Circle of Support	14





The Challenge



Too often education policy makers design programs and processes without consulting the teachers and school leaders who will have to implement them. So too, initiatives that schools develop *for* families often fail to be designed *with* families as partners.

This limits the extent to which programs and services are relevant and meaningful to families' lives. It also runs contrary to schools' goal to make family engagement a shared responsibility.





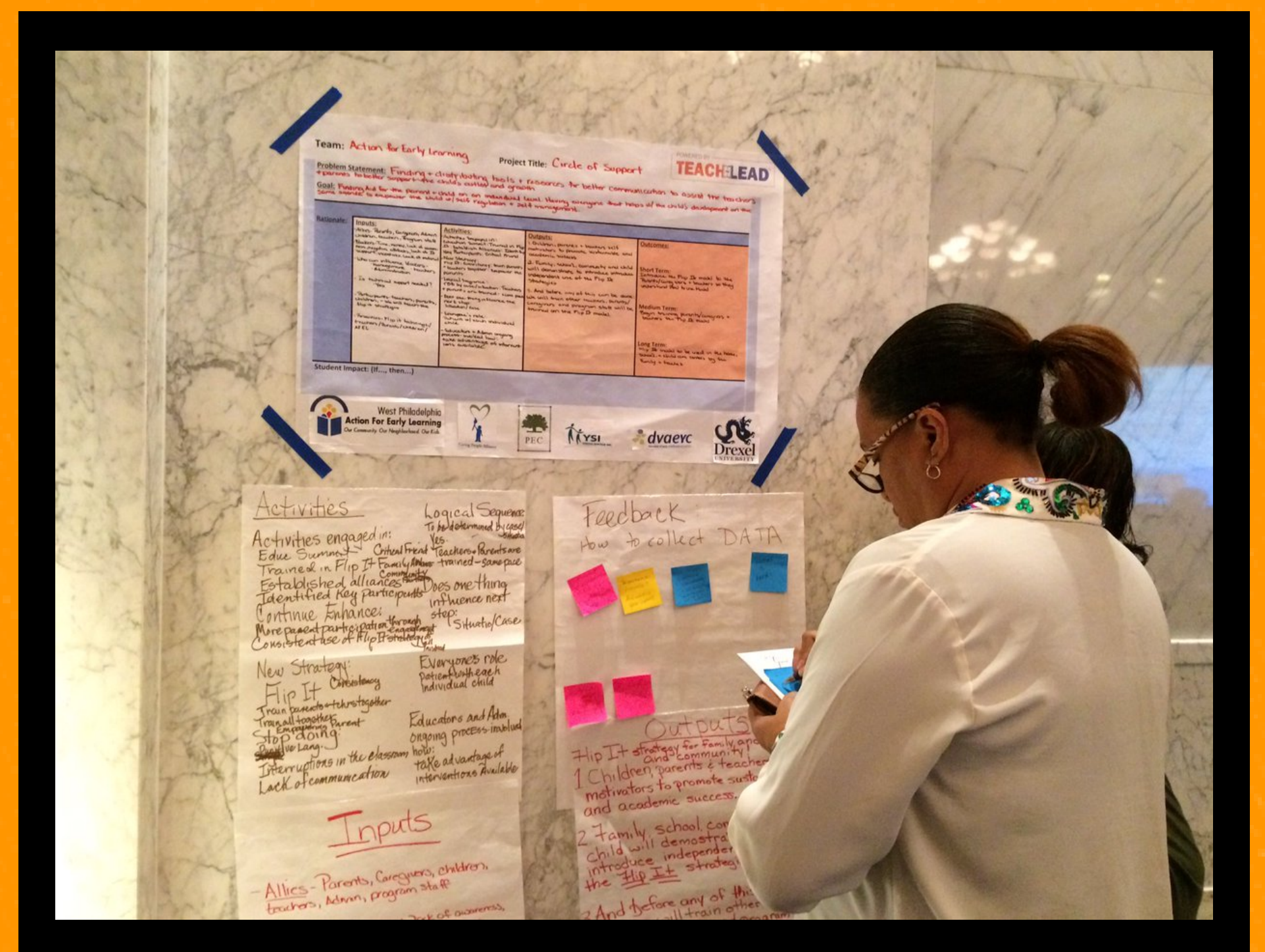
The Opportunity

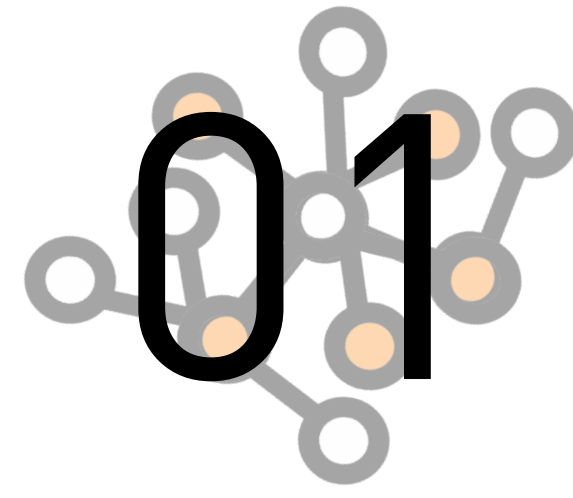
In March 2018, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), under the leadership of its Family Ambassador, Frances Frost, held its first Family Engagement Summit, Powered By Teach to Lead. Teach to Lead is a four year old initiative run by ED in partnership with ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) that is designed to provide resources, facilitate stakeholder consultation, and encourage professional collaboration to promote and amplify the work of teacher leaders.

A primary way Teach to Lead works is by running Summits that give educators and other key stakeholders space, time, and guidance to collaborate intentionally and to develop action plans for ideas that will benefit students and schools in their communities. Recently, Teach to Lead has expanded to provide support to other organizations to tailor the model to specific geographic areas or topics of concern. A unique feature of the Family Engagement Summit, Powered By Teach to Lead was its explicit focus on engaging families and elevating family members' voices.

Key elements of the Family Engagement Summit, Powered By Teach to Lead (as well as Teach to Lead and Powered by Teach to Lead Summits more generally) are:

- **A recruitment process that promotes equity;**
- **A logic model development process that helps teams move from good ideas to actionable plans;**
- **Networking and peer learning opportunities to promote the sharing of ideas; and**
- **Expert guidance for each team from a “critical friend” to encourage new perspectives and ways of thinking.**





The Recruitment Process

Actively Engaging Marginalized Communities and Recognizing Families as Assets

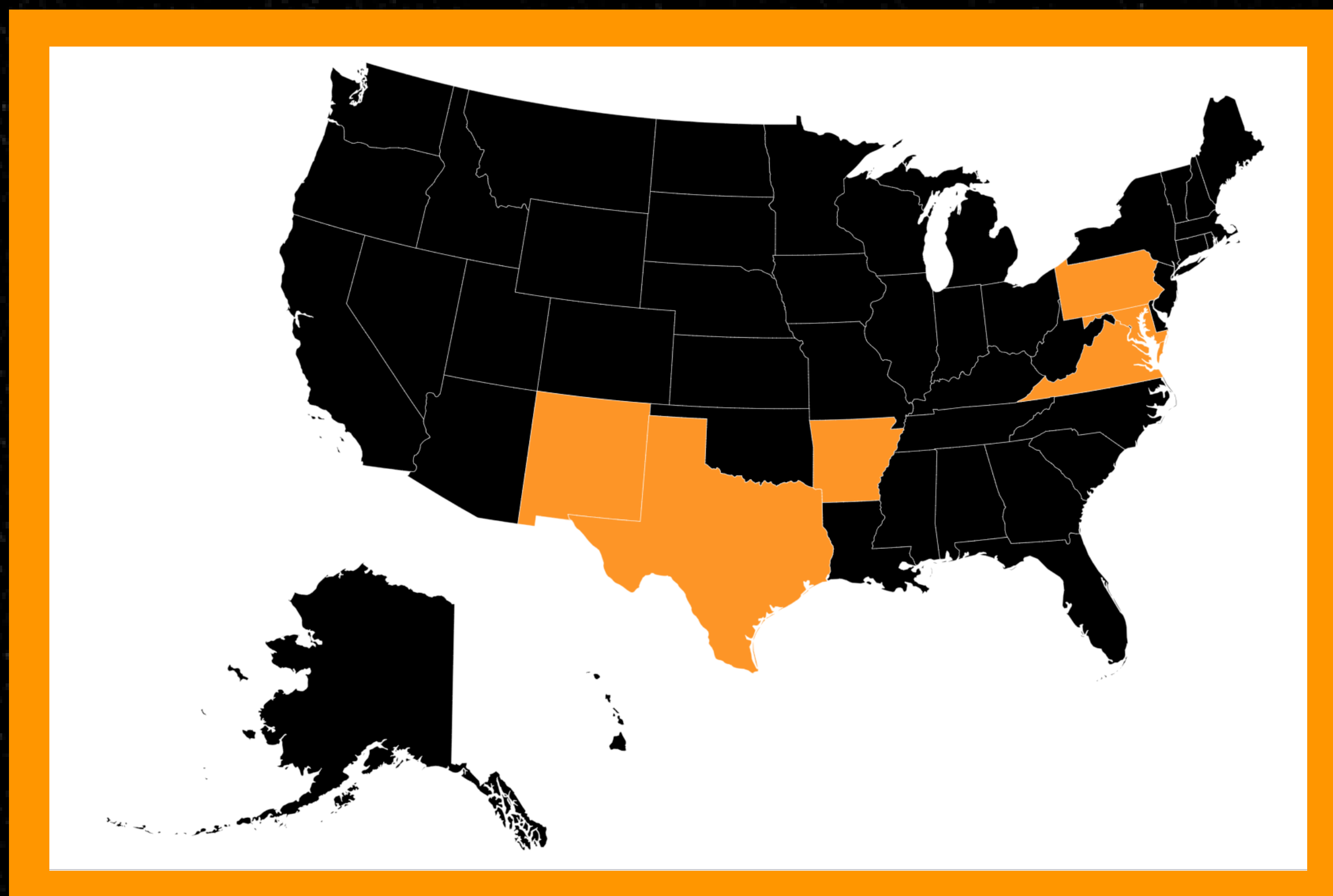
To recruit teams for the Family Engagement Summit, ED put out a ["Call for Ideas."](#) Applications specified that:

- **Each team must include at least one family member from the school community.**
- **Ideas must seek to improve family engagement, student outcomes, or promote parent leadership.**
- **Teams must address issues impacting traditionally under-represented families in their communities.**
- **Ideas may be functioning at any stage of development (for example, an emerging idea requiring input and/or buy-in from stakeholders, a recently launched idea being developed, or a mature idea that has been implemented and is ripe for improvement and expansion).**
- **Preference would be given to projects within high-poverty districts as part of the selection criteria.**

These criteria enforced the summit's commitment to raising up families as assets, with family voice at the center of each and every summit team's project.



Family Engagement Summit Teams At a Glance



11 teams

6 states represented

Proposed projects included:

- Creating more robust district-wide family literacy programming;
- Increasing family engagement with state report cards;
- Amplifying father engagement; and
- Effectively utilizing a parent-engagement advisory committee.

The Logic Model Development and Planning Process

Identifying Goals in Partnership with Families

One of the main activities of the summit was the guided creation of a logic model, which allowed teams to co-develop project goals and strategies with families. For Teach to Lead, the logic model is a graphic organizer showing how day-to-day activities connect to the results programs hope to attain. Teams identified their problem of practice and its root causes, a broad range of inputs and specific activities to address the problem, the outputs the activities would result in, and the short- and long-term outcomes they were hoping to achieve.

Developing a logic model requires a clear communication of concepts. Family participants at the summit were particularly helpful in making sure that educators avoided professional jargon so that all team members could arrive at a shared understanding of ideas.

Example Logic Model

"Sometimes our language is not always the right fit when trying to explain our vision to parents. Our family representative helped me to be able to present our project in a language that could be perceived better."

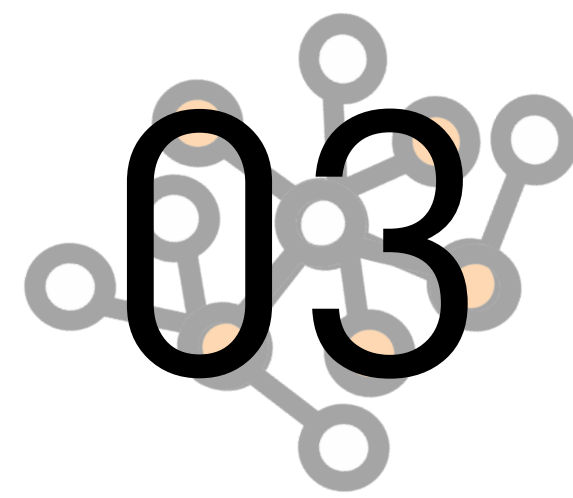
- Teacher participant

We kept going around the table and everyone was providing great vocabulary ... but what type of conversation would that be ... I wanted to work with her to shorten it and to make it less professional jargon-y."

- Parent participant

Team: Increasing Family Engagement with State Report Cards.		Project Title:	
<p>Problem Statement: Families in Ward 7 & 8 have historically had challenges with accessing information about systems and structures of education which excludes them from making their own well informed decisions about their child's education.</p> <p>Goal: 1) Inform families in Ward 7 & 8 on how to use and understand DC's ESSA plan and how state report card in order to 1) improve families' ability to be more active in their children's schools, 2) increase families' engagement around the use of the state report card, and 3) amplify the power of parents as advocates for their children and their schools.</p>			
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We inform families about ESSA and the state report card. - We engage families to make sure they are using the report card to make informed decisions about school for their children. - We encourage parents to advocate for the supports they want to see for their child(ren)'s schools. - We create a parent-centered toolkit and training program for schools and community-based organizations to share with families about ESSA and the report card. 	<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a social media campaign and toolkit. - Host cluster, ward, or quadrant-based meetings in this case, focusing on East of the River Communities. - Hold meetings in public and charter schools in Ward 7 & 8. - Re-craft OSSE's toolkit to amplify the power of parents to be informed advocates and for schools to run their own information sessions. - Communicate at the school level using backpack and other communication tools. - Host office hours about ESSA in Ward 7 & 8, tapping into resource centers and libraries to help close the technology gap. 	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents will feel more informed about ESSA and the state report card. - Parents will report that they feel more informed about their children's school performance. - Parents will report that they feel more informed about inequities in all schools. - Parents will report that they feel more confident in their self-advocacy. - Schools will report that more parents inquire about the school's performance, including success and challenges. - Schools collaborate with parents to address the resources and support the school needs. - Education policy makers will provide funding and supports for schools to reduce inequities based on the state report card. 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents understand ESSA and the state report card. - Parents understand how their child(ren)'s school is performing. <p>Medium Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents will come together to support and improve their schools. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All stakeholders will view the state report card as a tool in order to create positive change at your school.
<p>Student Impact: (If..., then...) All families understand ESSA and the state report card <u>then</u> they can amplify their power to create the change in their community.</p>			

A sample draft of a logic model developed by one Family Engagement Summit team.

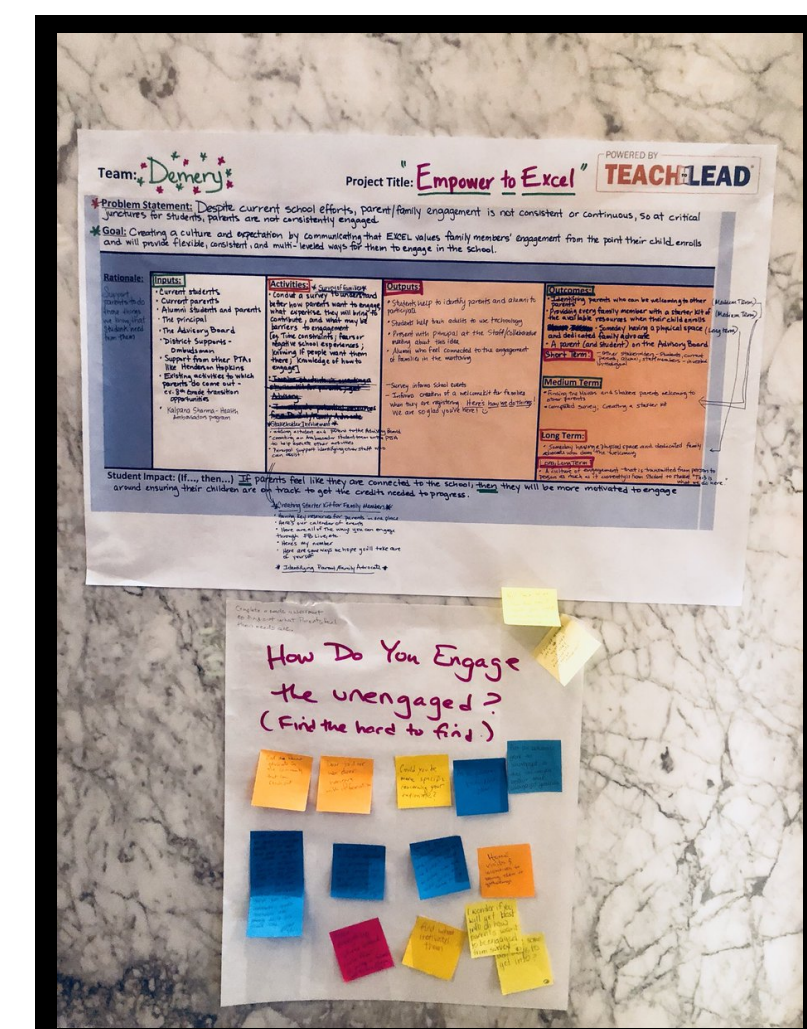


Networking and Peer Learning

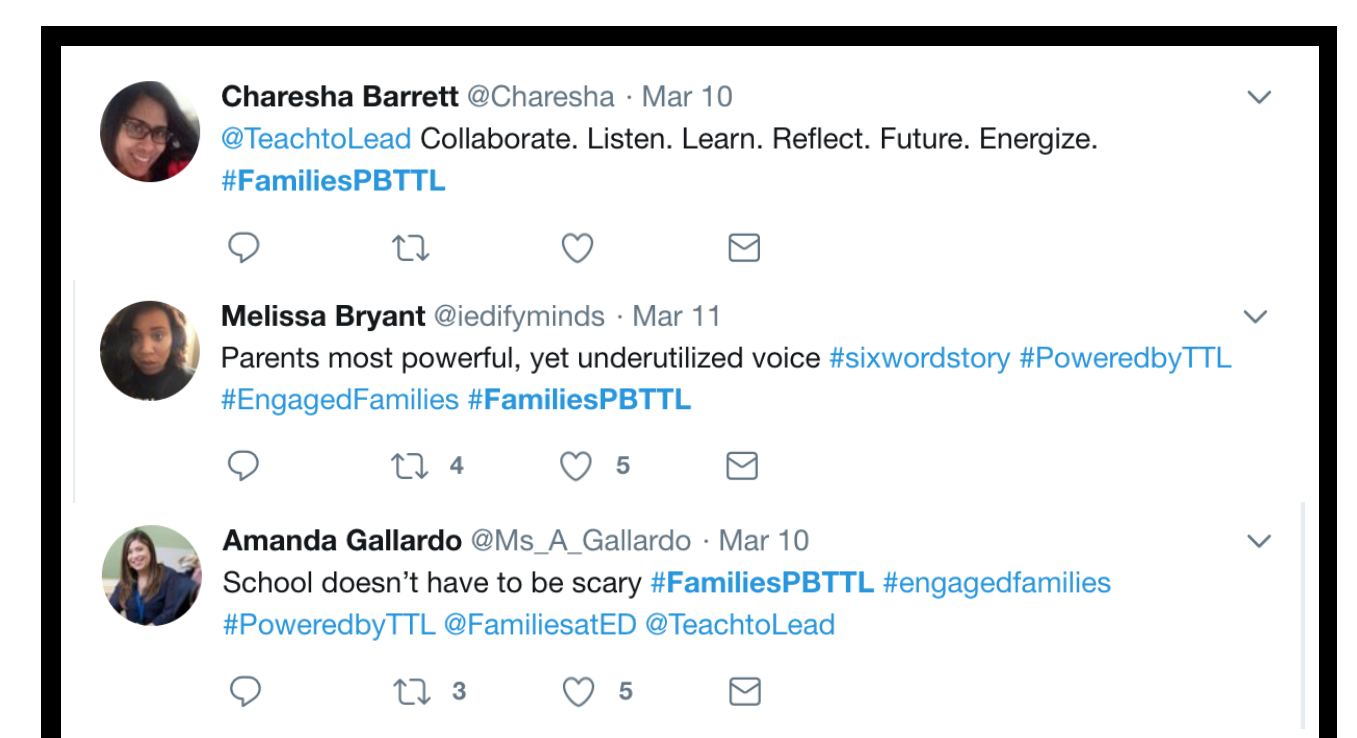
Building Strong Relationships Among Families and Communities

Throughout the conference, participants had various opportunities to build relationships with families within their team and learn from others:

- Icebreakers introduced a fun way for participants to meet one another and to get to know team members in a more sociable way.
- Networking Opportunities occurred throughout the event, providing participants the time to connect, share ideas, and even network!
- Topic-Specific Breakout Sessions on a variety of themes—such as community organizing and partnership formation –allowed team members to go out on their own and bring information back to share with their group.
- A Peer Learning Panel, which was made up of educators, parents, and community stakeholders from Baltimore, expanded participants' ideas.
- A Gallery Walk, at the end of the summit, in which teams presented displays of their projects and provided 1-minute and seven-second summaries of their work, gave teams opportunities to learn and share with one another. See <http://bit.ly/7SecondSharing>
- Social Media Prompts were used periodically throughout the summit, and after it was over to allow participants to stay connected using the hashtags: #FamiliesPBTTL and #EngagedFamilies.



Gallery Walk team example



Six-word Stories on Twitter

“The really unique thing about the Family Engagement Summit using the Powered By model is that it has the ability to bring together teams from different contexts and communities. While collaborating in this way might feel a little forced by requiring parents to be included on the team with educators, we like to think of it as more intentional to proactively consider the perspective and input of families in developing solutions for improving schools. The Teach to Lead model gives participants the opportunity to share, exchange, network, and build upon their ideas and thinking. The intentional choice to get diverse stakeholders who might not normally collaborate together like parents, community members, school administrators, and educators to form a team and collaborate in this guided way provides results that are simply not possible during the traditional school day or context. In this way, Powered By promotes intentional networks and relationships.”

- Frances Frost, Family Ambassador,
U.S. Department of Education

04

External Feedback and Guidance

Critical Friends

All teams were paired with a “critical friend,” or summit guide, whose role was to share knowledge and resources with teams throughout the two days. Critical friends helped summit teams to continually focus on families’ perspectives and suggest new ideas and ways of thinking.

“Critical friends can ultimately make or break a project because they are both the content expert and the facilitator, which takes a lot of knowledge. It is really more of an art than a science. It is a difficult balance between providing expertise and advice to the team and telling them what to do. Sometimes, when a team might be focusing on an issue that has been tackled previously by an existing model or strategy, the critical friend can bring lessons learned to light. Sometimes teams just need a champion – someone who’s saying ‘what you’re working on is important and you’re on the right track.’”

- Gillian Cohen-Boyer, Director,
Teach to Lead, U.S. Department of Education





The Potential of Powered By

As evidenced by the Summit evaluations, all agreed that the Family Engagement Summit was a valuable planning process with and for families. Three keys to success were:

- **Bringing family members to be part of a team of teacher, school and community leaders to focus on a specific family engagement project;**
- **Creating intentional collaboration—the careful and deliberate structuring of the problem-solving and peer-learning process; and**
- **Encouraging meaningful project work by giving teams the time, space, tools, and expert guidance to network, problem solve, and plan.**

To learn more about the Powered By Teach to Lead and to access tools to implement this model to your community, visit teachtolead.org or email info@teachtolead.org.



Voices From the Summit

The following reflections and quotes from organizers and summit teams provide a glimpse into the Powered By Teach to Lead model, as well as how teams experienced the summit. Voices highlighted represent the U.S. Department of Education, Teach to Lead, D.C. PAVE, and West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning Initiative.



Reflections on Powered By Teach to Lead

**By: Frances Frost and Gillian Cohen-Boyer,
U.S. Department of Education**

In the last year and a half, through Powered By Teach to Lead, we've been experimenting with how to bring our summit model of teacher leadership to a wider range of organizations and stakeholders. We both saw utilizing Powered By Teach to Lead as useful for family leadership. Families have expertise that needs to be engaged, and this model—with its focus on giving teams the time, space, and tools to collaborate—provides a real opportunity for families and educators to sit down and solve problems together.

Through our summit evaluations and anecdotally, we've heard a few ways that the summit has been important. For some it has meant thinking about families in new ways.

Some of the teams were new, and were pulled together specifically for the summit, and for others, this was the first time established groups gave real thought to giving voice to parents in their planning process. Some teams weren't used to including parents and needed to step back and reevaluate the way they were thinking. The critical-friend and logic-model process really lends itself to this. It creates a shift from, "What are we going to provide families?" or "How many people might show up?" to thinking meaningfully about, "How are we going to design experiences with families, engage them, and make this meaningful?"

This work is not easy, though. At the opening reception, we spent time thinking about who was in the room and who wasn't because of race, class, or citizenship and travel ability. It was an eye-opener and makes us think through how we need to be creative and open to ways to elevate the family voice. For some, this meant consistently taking time to consider the parent perspective of those not in the room.

For some, the conference is about helping people carve out the time. It forces and requires teams to sit down together and think about what they are trying to do. In one weekend, they are able to achieve what might take 10 months back in their community. And the extended time allows for teachers and families to develop relationships and feel like they are in it together. Interestingly, this was one of the things the teams wanted more time for: being able to hear about new ideas and projects with and for families. It illustrates that there's a real craving and need to create a shared feeling to see others doing this work well.





PAVE: Reformulating State Report Cards for Families

By: Maya Martin, PAVE

Participating in the summit provided us with the opportunity and space to zero in on work we had already started, specifically, serving families in Wards 7 and 8 in Washington, D.C. At our Parent Policy Summit in May 2017, our parent leaders voted “Great Schools in Every Ward with One Citywide School Report Card” as one of their top issues and priorities, and we then set out to discuss state report cards so that parents in D.C. can understand and make use of them.

The school report card is a fundamental part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but many families aren’t given enough opportunities to understand and know their rights related to it. Our organization, [PAVE \(Parents Amplifying Voices in Education\)](#), has been working with parents and family members in order to organize and highlight families’ voices and needs as they pertain to how well their children’s schools are doing. Not having one single way of knowing how schools are performing is a problem for parents. Our city hasn’t been providing enough information for parents, and both our public charter schools and traditional public schools do not have a single tool for parents to use to understand school performance. A single citywide report card is important to families, helping them to identify how and where schools need support—and there should be more information and transparency on what parents want to know about their child’s school and what they can do to help.

Throughout the summit, our group worked together to answer three questions with a specific focus on Wards 7 and 8, as our communities east of the Anacostia River are both geographically and socioeconomically isolated from the rest of the city, and often, from the information that families need and want. The questions included:

- **How do we get the report card into the hands of families while making sure that they know what it is?**
- **What are the requirements of parents’ support?**
- **What can families do with this information to support their schools?**

Our group reflected the diverse perspectives of the communities that we serve and the work that we do engaging families, with representation from PAVE that includes a Ward 8 parent and community engagement leader at our traditional public schools, a state board of education member who leads the ESSA Task Force, a Ward 8 teacher and parent, and a dean of culture in one of our Ward 7 schools. Oftentimes, as leaders, we work in rooms with other leaders similar to ourselves, so having these diverse voices in one room at one time was important and brought a new perspective. All of us having the time to work together—by holding the summit over a weekend when we could devote that time—was critical. We do our work in silos, but the summit helped us to come together to do this work in a holistic way.

We were also able to learn from other family-engagement models and teams at the summit during the gallery walk and networking sessions built into the schedule. I liked learning about different people in different parts of the country. I loved the group of dads who were trying to figure out how to support their children’s schools, as often the voices that we hear from most are moms. Our organization is probably 80 percent moms, so it was great to see different models of groups coming together to raise up the voices of families. Since the summit, we’ve presented our plan to the larger board in our community and it’s been received well. We continue to work on this process, and we’re optimistic it will bring about big change.



West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning Initiative (AFEL): Creating a Circle of Support

AFEL Summit Team Members

[The West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning \(AFEL\) Initiative](#) is a Drexel University-led collaboration of social service and education agencies and community stakeholders working to create an education support system for students and families in the West Philadelphia Promise Zone. AFEL is the early-childhood education improvement strategy for the West Philadelphia Promise Neighborhood Initiative.

"The Family Engagement Summit provided an opportunity for our team to co-develop a plan to promote and disseminate a behavior management strategy—called FLIP IT—across home, school, and community settings, to support healthy social and emotional learning for children and families. We call this the Circle of Support. The summit gave us an opportunity to work on this intensively, with parent input that was indispensable."

**- Maria Walker, Director,
Drexel University/Action for Early Learning**

"I'm the one on the outside looking in to see how it works for my child. The summit was beneficial to me for that reason. After the summit, I applied to be a parent ambassador [part of the AFEL initiative]. I'm getting more involved with what we're doing and I'm excited to use FLIP IT with other children in the community, too. For me personally, being a black father in the neighborhood that I'm in, I think we need more individuals and leaders to look at learning. As far as the group, I want to have that extra push to be more engaged in things as a parent ambassador."

**- DeShaun Sherell, Parent,
YSI Baring House**

"Sitting down and hearing the feedback from teachers who are in the classroom doing the work: that was important to hear. It was good to have DeShaun coming from a different perspective. It's always good to have the parent side and perspective. I was excited that he was so open to coming to the conference and that he was excited to use the tool at home and that it would be helpful to him. It was great to see how willing a parent was to come and do this and spend time doing that."

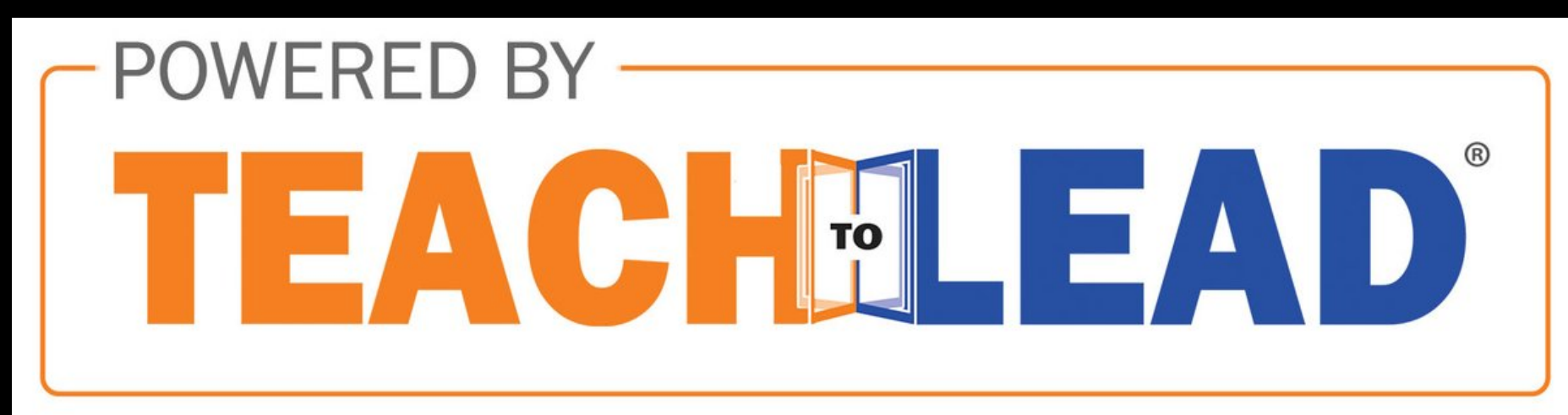
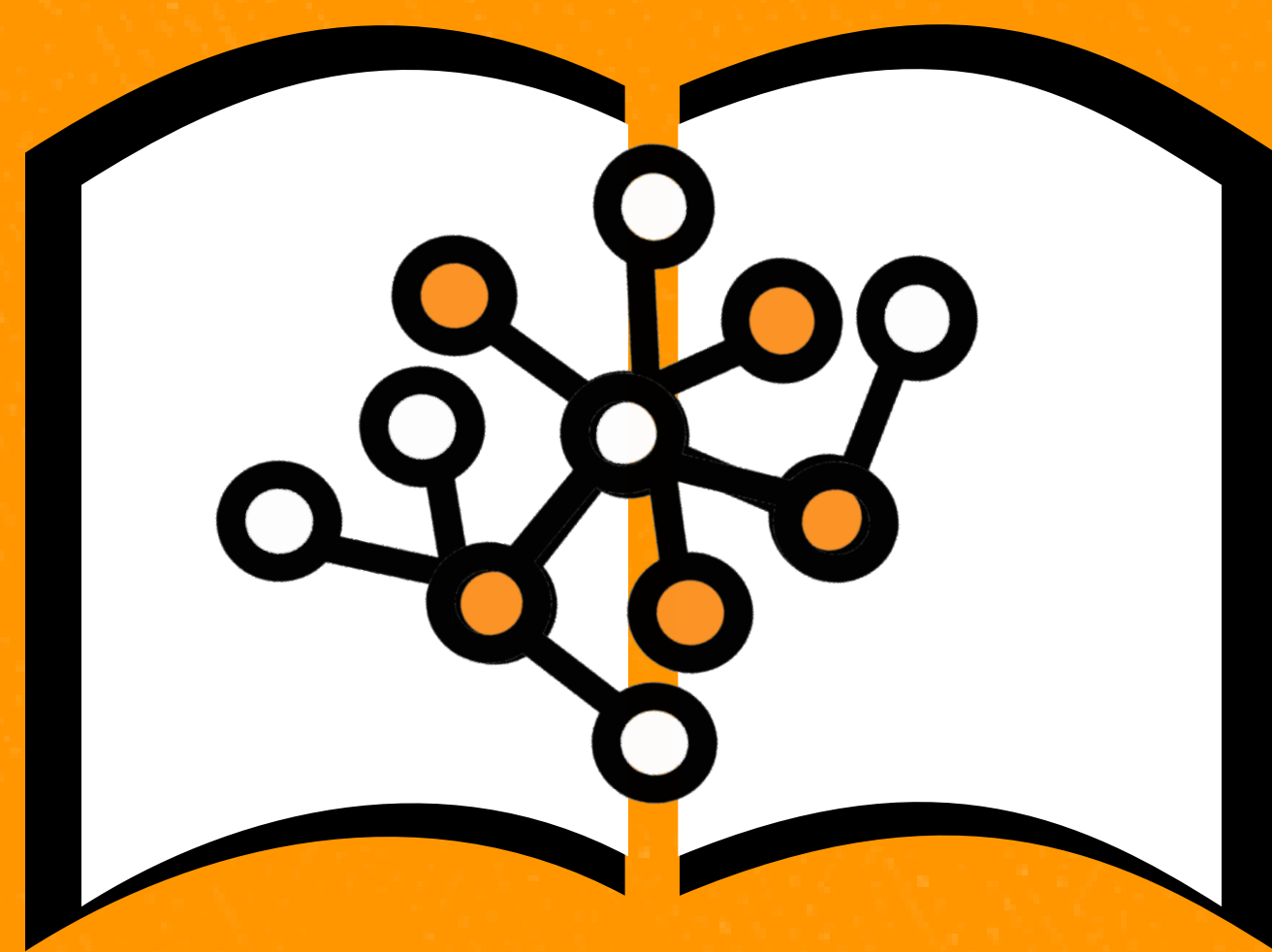
**- Leslie Rhinehart, Program Manager,
YSI Baring House**

"Having the opportunity to go to the summit allowed us to get knowledge outside of our own understanding, especially with the community involvement part and making sure parents are in the experience and a part of the process. Sometimes our language does not always fit with parents when we're trying to explain our vision to parents. Sometimes we need the voice outside of our professionalism. DeShaun helped me to be able to present it in a language that could be perceived better."

**- Angelique Maury, Director,
YSI Baring House**

"I found the conference to be very interesting because one of my components to being a teacher is family engagement. I got to see it at another level. I normally see it through letters and drop-off, but to see people come together to do something at a higher level, it was eye-opening to me."

**- Evonya Taylor, Teacher,
CPA West Philadelphia Community Center**



Global Family
Research Project

For more information, visit globalfrp.org.