Leadership Training Response 2: Parent Programs

As Child Development professionals, it is essential that we become aware of the programs within our community that provide education and support for the parents of children we work with. Learning more about Parent Café and hearing about their philosophy was inspiring and instantly caught my attention. The facilitators were knowledgeable, experienced, and relatable, which was refreshing and inviting. Their philosophy is to create an environment where parents can have meaningful conversations in order to solve problems that could potentially be affecting their children. The philosophy that guides this approach to working with parents is a based on a Strengthening Families Framework and the Five Protective Factors. The structure within these sessions was flexible and can be guided in certain directions based on specific conversations. The parents are split up into tables with resources, handouts and art materials for them to doodle in order to get more comfortable. Family goals and topics during the sessions were incorporated on cards at the tables with a list of five protective factors: resilience, relationships, knowledge, support, and communication. The approach demonstrated by the facilitators was very helpful and therapeutic for even the students. I could see their approach being very successful because of how welcoming they were from the start, and the topics introduced were relevant for each and every one of us.

I have been taught about two other programs that incorporate parents, and it was interesting to relate those with the Parent Café and their philosophy. Program 1 is the work I am currently doing with a program called Parent Infant Programs. This program consists of early intervention in homes with parents and children in a social, play, and communicative therapy setting. Program 1 serves all parents who have referred their child for having a social or communication delay or have had a doctor refer their child to receive services. Program 1 supports parents with children who are delayed socially by providing an intervention-based program, which has received a lot of evidence proving that services can help increase social skills for children who are delayed socially or developmentally.

Program 2 is an in-home parenting program through Youth for Change in Butte County. Program 2 requires referrals from various organizations and parents, as well. Program 2 supports parents who are simply seeking valuable techniques for improvement within their family support system. This program doesn’t have distinct evidence, but there is research revealing that parental involvement directly affects a child’s development and wellbeing. The goals for both of these programs are to provide support and resources for parents. Both of these programs require full-parental participation, involvement and presence during the sessions.

If I were to create my own parent program, I would definitely introduce the Parent Café idea with discussion topics and time away from their children. After an hour of structured discussion time with just the parents, I would incorporate a way for the children to be integrated for the second half of the program sessions to create an family intervention-based environment. I would establish program goals that would involve educational discussion time for adults only, and then add support and facilitate parent-child interactions afterwards. I would have small groups of parents sit together during the discussion portion, and I would find time to sit in at each group, observe, listen and then add in my advice and support. The second session, the children would come into the room, and I would have each parent interact with their child one-on-one in a play setting. I would go around to each group, observe, and offer further advice depending on each individual family and their needs. Afterwards, I would have the parents fill out a simple survey with comments on what they took away from the session, or what they would want to see differently next time. This would help me assess what I need to keep and what needs to be altered.

**Program 1:**

<http://parentinfantprograms.com/>

**Program 2:**

<http://www.youth4change.org/index.php/programs/behavioral-health-in-home-bhih/>