Leadership Training Response 2: Parent Programs

Parent Café is a free community event where families gather and parents or guardians have the opportunity to participate in meaningful, guided conversations that help solve problems that could affect their children. Parent Café is based on the Strengthening Families Framework and the Five Protective Factors. The Philosophy that guides this approach to working with parents is meeting parents where they are and focusing on their strengths rather than focusing on what they are doing wrong. During a Café session, parents are reminded of the Parent Café Agreements, which are guidelines everybody has agreed on. The agreements are speak from your own experiences (use I statements), listen attentively, do not interrupt, no judgments (positive or negative), do not give advice, confidentiality (what is talked about in the café, stays in the café), and turn your cell phone off.

The family goals associated with participation are, parental resilience, social connections, providing a network of people who care, listen and share parenting values while offering the ability for parents to nurture their children and get through difficult and challenging circumstances in order to recover and even grow from the experience. They offer knowledge of parenting and child development, a basic understanding of how children develop and what children need from their parents, as well as parenting skills and strategies for guiding children’s behavior. Concrete support in times of need is available as well as access to resources including financial help, housing support, mental health or substance abuse services, health care and much more. They help teach parents the social and emotional competence in children, the age appropriate ability of children to understand and cope with feelings such as anger, happiness, and sadness, and to relate to others. I think that this approach is very effective. It’s a safe place for parents to come and connect and learn about things that impact their everyday lives. I think the feeling of community and support can make a tremendous impact on an individual.