



**PARENTS SUPPORTING  
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE  
(PARENTS SEE)**

*Parents SEE* is a collaboration between the Connecticut Center for School Change and the Connecticut Commission on Children. The Center partners with school districts to improve their organizational coherence in order to increase student achievement and sponsors an executive leadership program for superintendents. The Commission developed its nationally-recognized Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) 15 years ago and has a proven track record of developing civically-engaged parent leaders across the state.

Over the last two years, the Commission and the Center have partnered with district superintendents and community design teams to pilot *Parents SEE* in Bridgeport, New Britain, Norwalk, Stamford and Windsor. Using participant and facilitator feedback, the Center and the Commission have produced a high-quality parent educational leadership program that now can be rolled out statewide.

*Parents SEE* was developed by the Center for School Change and the Commission on Children to provide parents with skills and understanding necessary to become leaders, change agents and active participants in education at the school, district and state levels. Research studies show a clear linkage between student achievement and parent and family involvement. When schools, families and community groups work together, students do better in school and have a higher probability of success.

*“This course gave me insight into what parents need in order to be effective advocates for change.”*  
*Stamford Parents SEE graduate*

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

*Parents SEE* provides motivated parents, grandparents and guardians with practical strategies for actively engaging with other parents, with educators and with community leaders to address with confidence public policies and civic engagement to improve schools for all children. During each of the 3-hour sessions and full day kick-off retreat, participants actively explore questions at the heart of leadership, change and education policy. To do this, participants acquire knowledge, engage in dialogue that encourages understanding of diverse viewpoints and experiences, and practice the skills needed to effect constructive change. By the end of the course, parents have a toolkit that enables them to address public policy issues and engage as parents and civic leaders to improve schools for all children.

*Parents SEE* is based on four core beliefs:

- All children can achieve at high levels and meet high standards.
- Our society has the responsibility to educate all children.
- Parental involvement in education is essential to student success.
- Informed civic engagement makes schools better and helps children achieve at higher levels.

The *Parents SEE* curriculum was designed so that in each session participants focus on an essential question related to educational leadership, partnering, change and policy. Parents acquire understanding and practice skills necessary for them to become leaders, change agents, and active participants in education policy development and governance, at the school, district, and state levels. They learn how to facilitate partnerships with district and school personnel in order to address school improvement and increase student achievement. During the program, parents develop and express their interests within a public policy framework, as individuals, with peers, and as members of groups.

## **DESIGN**

*Parents SEE* course components include:

- 12 sessions to build skills in partnering with schools to improve education
- a full-day retreat to develop a caring community of parents seeking to lead in education
- opportunity to practice leadership and civic skills with on-going feedback, and
- a graduation ceremony and recognition of graduates with a “parent leadership in education” certificate

A local civic design team that reflects the demographic profile of the community oversees program implementation. Design teams may be established through the leadership of an elected official, a not-for-profit organization, a government agency or a constituency group. The design team secures funding for the program and designates and supports a Parents SEE community coordinator to plan, organize and oversee the program. Together, the coordinator and design team recruit and select parents. The selection process helps determine the potential for a community of parents. Ideally, the class should be a heterogeneous mix of participants.

The training is offered at no cost to parents. The program begins with an all-day retreat held on a Saturday to orient participants and build community. The twelve class sessions are held weekly from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm and are coordinated with the school holiday schedule. For each cohort of 20 participants there are two *Parents SEE* certified facilitators, one with a background in education and one with experience in PLTI.

Dinner, on-site child care and a transportation stipend, if needed, are provided to participants. Participants who meet the *Parents SEE* graduation requirements may also be eligible for continuing education credits (CEUs) awarded on behalf of the State Department of Education. School leaders attend as guests, facilitating dialogue and policy partnerships.

***“A great course that will teach parents about the educational system and how we can change it.”***  
**Bridgeport Parents SEE graduate**