

# FAMILIES LEADING OUR COMMUNITY

Working group of the Zero to Five Butte-Silver Bow Collaborative



Zero to Five Butte-Silver Bow collaborative and FLOC (Families Leading Our Community) are dedicated to working to authentically engage, empower, and learn from parents and families in our community. We believe that, by prioritizing family voices, we will find more effective, timely, and creative solutions for our community and the best outcomes for our children.

FLOC is a work group of the Zero to Five Butte-Silver Bow Collaborative. The FLOC is made up of parents and professionals who are dedicated to building parent and caregiver capacity through support, listening, and learning. The FLOC also acts as a resource and support for any community agency or business wishing to build their engagement practices.

## FLOC'S BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT

- A welcoming environment
- Focus on strengths and self-empowerment
- Focus on results
- A learning approach
- Inclusiveness and respect for individual experiences, views and cultures
- Network building
- Sustained engagement
- Community driven

## BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

### *Be willing to adjust*

After each family engagement event, the FLOC gets together to debrief. What worked well, what could be improved? The willingness to continually reflect and improve has resulted in better engagement.

### *Messaging is important!*

*"Come talk to us about this thing you don't understand"* doesn't resonate with parents and families.

*"Come to a Valentine's day event with kid's activities and learn about what is going on in the community for kids"* does!

The FLOC organized a family and community event to help launch and design the Learning Landscapes project, a community project to develop spaces for children and families to play and learn together all around Butte. The FLOC was hoping for broad participation in the project, so they organized a children's Valentine's Day party to bring people together. Children were provided with licensed child care, dinner, crafts and games in one area, while parents and other community members met to hear about Learning Landscapes, share a meal, and give feedback about the project. This was a wonderful success, and the result has been a thriving group working to implement the first Learning Landscape project. Providing programming for children, food, and transportation assistance, and then focusing on that in the outreach, resulted in wonderful participation.

### *Set goals*

The FLOC has set specific and measurable goals for the next four years to increase family engagement in our Zero to Five collaborative, and the community at large.

*"The biggest lesson I have learned is that family engagement looks different from leadership engagement. It can be as simple as a returned Facebook message, participation in an empathy interview, or completing a parent survey. Our collaborative has used a range of engagement methods to integrate family voice to guide our decisions. It is not always about the number of parents that come to your meetings, rather being creative about how you include their voice."*

— Cass Weber, Zero to Five Collaboration Coordinator, Butte-Silver Bow