

Partners in Leadership

Sewall Child Development Center

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Sewall Child Development Center, located in Denver, knows the importance of empowering families and their children with special needs. One initiative the Center implements is the Partners in Leadership program; a support that provides year-long training, community-building, and Inclusive Leadership Development.

Sewall Child Development Center provided training to 17 families and several adults with disabilities at the organization's headquarters. The 17 families represent current Sewall children, ages 2- 5 years as well as families of children enrolled in REACH, an inclusive charter school, through 3rd grade.

Sewall's training closely resembles that of the Partners in Policymaking curriculum. The Center utilizes their best practices to provide 128 hours of training across 8 sessions. Family partners receive training about all eleven topics in the curriculum, including information on:

- History of Disabilities
- Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning
- Service Coordination and Case Management
- Supported and Competitive Employment
- Supported Living and Home Ownership
- Assistive Technology
- Person Centered Planning
- Local and State Government
- Federal Government and Federal Issues
- Community Organizing
- Parliamentary Procedure and Serving on Boards

In addition to these core competencies, Sewall will leverage its expertise educating families on how to navigate school-based systems and how to support children in kindergarten.

Sewall leaders have advice for other organizations looking to implement a similar practice. The first is that families need ample time to process strong, complex emotions throughout the training. Fortunately, Sewall's experienced staff has been able to build time for processing into the curriculum, and is well-equipped to facilitate emotional, personal conversations. Any staff implementing this curriculum should have strong facilitation skills and be comfortable working in this environment. Second, it is incredibly helpful to have a broad knowledge of local advocacy and disability resources. Being able to provide referrals and guidance to families helped build trust and allowed families to feel more supported throughout the process.