

ELECT SouthCoast Parent Leadership Initiative

Overview and how to apply

Key points:

- > You **must attend an info session** or connect with Colleen (colleen.dawicki@gmail.com) in order to apply in August
- > We will connect parents/caregivers of the same school so you can share ideas and consider collaborating. (*Please let us know if you do not want your email shared.*)
- > Bring your creative ideas! We don't have specific projects in mind (though we do share ideas), so consider what works best for your school community or neighborhood at this time.
- > This is a pilot year of a three-year grant, so if the timing isn't right, consider applying at a later date!

About ESC

- Since 2021, ESC has supported women and parent leaders growing their leadership, networks, and contribution to public service
- Our network members have successfully run for local office across the SouthCoast, including School Committee, Selectboard, planning/zoning boards, library trustees, and Board of Health roles
- Our co-directors, Colleen Dawicki and Jordan Latham, have both run for and held public office. We're also parents of school-age kids!
- Partners include: New Bedford Public Schools, the City of New Bedford Office of Housing & Community Development, the United Way of Greater New Bedford, the YWCA, and PACE.
- This is a three-year initiative funded by the Merck Family Foundation

Why parent leadership?

- Elected leadership in New Bedford does not represent the diversity of our city's residents and experiences
 - Just 2 of 7 NB School Committee members are women, and only one member is a NBPS parent
 - NB needs to double the number of women in office to achieve gender parity
- Parent/caregiver leadership is limited in the NB schools, with as few as 4-5 active PTOs across 24 schools
- Research shows a strong link between parent engagement and civic leadership

→ *What would it take to help parents and caregivers become New Bedford's next generation of civic leaders?*

Initiative goals: what does success look like?

Within 1 year: Participating parents gain and apply leadership, governance, and organizing skills to effect change in their school communities

Within 3 years: An increase in active and sustained PTOs and/or School Councils across participating schools

Within 5-10 years: A pipeline of parent leaders advancing into broader civic roles, including service on boards, commissions, and in elected office

Initiative features

Two tracks to meet parents and caregivers where you're at

Coaching from experienced parent and civic leaders to help you meet your goals and navigate challenges

Project funding to help you take meaningful action in your school community and/or neighborhood

Stipends to value the cost of your time and support costs to participate

Network-building to connect parent/caregiver leaders citywide and share lessons and best practices

Pilot year: 2026-27 school year

Emerge track	Fellowship track
• For those new to school-based leadership • Supports the launch of a single project aimed at strengthening your school community and/or neighborhood • Includes limited coaching, project funding up to \$500, and stipend of up to \$300 upon completion • Duration: up to 3 months • May continue to Fellowship track	• For those undertaking a year-long initiative • Initiatives may include a series of events and/or building infrastructure to support sustained parent leadership/family engagement • Includes monthly coaching, project funding of up to \$3,000, and stipend of up to \$900 • Duration: school year
All participants will: attend network-building workshops (up to 4/year for Fellows); complete pre- and post-evaluations; and participate in monthly coaching	

What might you try? Ideas include...

SHORT-TERM PROJECTS

- School or neighborhood block party
- Family movie night
- Improve drop-off or pickup experience
- Civics fair
- Trunk-or-treat
- Multicultural celebration
- Spelling bee
- Science fair
- Bike- or walk-to-school events
- Community garden or mural
- Open swim at NBHS pool

LONGER-TERM INITIATIVES

- Develop a field study strategy/plan
- Establish or grow a PTO
- Launch a School Council, which oversees your school's improvement plan
- Address an issue area that cuts across schools/grade levels: sports, wellness, visual art, theater, music
- Establish before- and/or after-school program
- Enhance outdoor spaces and play areas

How can you participate?

June/July:

- Develop your idea! What do you want to accomplish?
- Consider your bandwidth and which track is right given your time and interest
- Connect with your principal: you'll need their support to participate
- For the Fellowship track, we ask you to apply as a team of at least two. (Teammates are encouraged for the Emerge track, too!)

August:

- Contact Colleen if you plan to apply. We'll set up a conversation and help you complete a brief application to outline your idea, team, and support needs.
- Our Advisory Board will help us select the first cohort. (Keep in mind: this is a three-year grant, so there will be more opportunities to participate!)

September:

- First cohort begins! Schedule of network events (2 in fall, 2 in spring) will be built based on participant availability.

Thank you!

Contact Colleen
(colleen.dawicki@gmail.com)
as questions or ideas emerge.