

Beyond Buy-In: Co-Creating Change with Families, Youth, and Staff

Presented by Sherri Britt Williams and Sonia Sabater, ECTA

Session Description:

Parent Centers work every day to engage families, youth, and community partners in meaningful ways. Yet many initiatives still focus on gaining “buy-in,” rather than building shared ownership. This interactive session introduces the REAL Framework, a practical structure for co-creating change with families, youth, and staff. Participants will explore how to move from informing and consulting to partnering and co-designing in outreach efforts, advisory groups, training initiatives, and program improvement activities. Through reflection and applied examples, participants will leave with concrete strategies to strengthen shared leadership, increase relevance, and improve sustainability in their Parent Center work.

Learning Objectives:

- Examine the limitations of traditional “buy-in” approaches in family engagement and outreach efforts.
- Identify practical strategies for positioning families, youth, and staff as co-creators of processes, products, and initiatives.
- Apply the REAL Framework to strengthen relevance, engagement, adaptability, and feedback loops when co-creating with families, youth, and staff in Parent Center initiatives.
- Develop an actionable next step for embedding shared ownership and co-creation into outreach, training, or leadership efforts within their organization.

Presenter Bios:

Sherri Britt Williams is a Senior Technical Assistance Specialist at the UNC–Chapel Hill Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute. A nationally Board Certified Coach and internationally certified Implementation Specialist, she provides national coaching and implementation support to strengthen inclusive early childhood systems through effective professional development design, leadership development, and co-creation with families and practitioners. She is the author of the REAL Framework: Guidance for Co-Creating with Critical Perspectives, developed through the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center.

Sonia Sabater is a Technical Assistance Associate at the UNC–Chapel Hill Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and works with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center. Her work focuses on partnering with families and state leaders to strengthen inclusive early childhood systems, promote meaningful family engagement, and support collaborative system improvement efforts grounded in shared leadership. She has co-facilitated multiple co-creation efforts using the REAL Framework: Guidance for Co-Creating with Critical Perspectives, developed through the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center.