

Olympic Educational Service District 114 Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP

Policy Council Circle of Leadership

OESD 114 Policy Council started in 1992 with a traditional leadership structure of officers that included a Chair, Vice Chair, Recorder and Treasurer. During the 1996-97 program year, Policy Council members expressed concern and frustration when the PC officers did not regularly attend Policy Council meetings. Oftentimes, a temporary “Chair” was selected among those in attendance. During 1997-98, Policy Council staff support provided more intense support to Policy Council officers to hopefully improve their attendance. These efforts did not significantly improve attendance. Also, Policy Council members began to notice and comment on the high turnover of the Policy Council officer positions. The turnover was directly related to the number of families that were moving out of the area. Policy Council members also felt discouraged about the amount of time they were spending electing new Policy Council officers to replace vacant positions. The 1997-98 Policy Council discussed alternatives to Policy Council leadership, and developed the “Circle of Leadership”.

The “Circle of Leadership” has no elected officers. All Policy Council members are trained in group facilitation and collaborative problem solving. At the end of each Policy Council meeting, the Facilitator and Notetaker for the next meeting are selected. Before or during the next meeting, Policy Council staff support work one-on-one with the Facilitator and Notetaker to assure they are prepared for their roles.

The following compares the traditional Policy Council officer structure and the Circle of Leadership structure:

Policy Council Officer Structure

Circle of Leadership Structure

One PC member learns facilitation skills.

Six to 10 members learn facilitation skills.

When an Officer resigns, time is spent at PC to elect a new position.

No elections are required.

One PC member learns note-taking skills.

Six to ten members learn note-taking skills.

PC members felt frustration at meetings.

PC members feel less frustrated when other members are absent.

Few members experience leadership roles.

Many members experience leadership roles.