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Jarma Wrighten: Well, good morning and happy to have you here. We're glad that you came out to the Parent's Place at the ECLKC. Lashautala Hicks: Thank you for having me.

Jarma: And I'm so very excited about you sharing your story today with us about being a parent as teacher in the home, as well as giving us a little highlight about your role as policy council. So to get started, I'd like you to just give me a little highlight -- a little information about how you've supported your child's learning in the home. Just tell me all about that, and you can tell me a little bit about your wonderful child in Head Start...

Lashautala: Okay. Jarma: ...and we can get started.

Lashautala: Okay. Well, I have a three-year-old son, so I'm a first-time Head Start parent, and what motivated me to become on the Policy Council board was that I wanted to be a constant involvement, active parent in my son's life, because that's what I think a lot of us younger parents are missing -- the chance to be proactive and really stay on top of our kids and make sure that they are getting quality education. And that comes with talking to the teachers, making sure that what they're teaching in the classroom also is reinforced in the home.

When my son started going to Head Start, he wasn't as independent as he is just three months after he's been in the program. My son's teacher makes him put his own coat on. We color in -- at school and we color at home. We're also practicing playing piano, and that's something else -- we're trying to get the music in him, too, because music helps with their learning also.

Jarma: I love that part -- playing the piano -- and music helps the brain, as well. Lashautala: Yes, it does. Jarma: So we know that. We learned that in a couple of sessions. And you -- as you've been involved in the Head Start program -- you mentioned Policy Council and your role as policy council and leader -- how do you think that that has impacted you as a parent to become a really good leader and a really great parent to teach your child at home?

Lashautala: Well, I think by being -- being on the Policy Council as the president gives me the opportunity to talk with more parents to see exactly what -- what do they expect out of the Head Start program. And then I could also translate that over to our board of trustees and try to make sure that our parents are getting their needs met, as well as Head Start is getting their needs met. So it's more of a cooperative learning experience between the parents and the Head Start program -- just making sure that we can facilitate everyone through the program, to get the most out of the program that they can.

Jarma: So how do you -- that sounds like you -- you really got -- you're on point with that because you want to make sure that there's a marriage between the family sharing -- parents being shared decision-makers and then Head Start being the major partners. So, you're doing really good by taking on that leadership role. Now back to being to parent as teacher -- how do you spend your together time with your child?

Lashautala: Well, I spend my together time with my son -- we go riding a lot. We stay in the country, and so we go and we look at the horses and he tells me what colors they are, how many they are, whether they are a mommy or daddy or the baby, for the little bitty horses. We also sing the ABC song. I'm always at his -- at my child's school talking to the teachers, seeing what he's learned that week in school.

That way on the weekend at home, we can retake those lessons and make them fun so that he is always constantly learning -- his brain is -- is constantly processing, because I've learned by being on the Policy Council, and as a parent, that kids learn from the process of repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. So with me working with the teacher as well as I do, it also reinforces my son's learning, but I make it fun for him always.

Jarma: And that's -- that's the key, making learning fun. And no matter what measures you take to make that fun -- singing silly songs, playing on the floor, dancing. Lashautala: Dancing silly.

Jarma: Yes, dancing silly -- and they love that I'm sure. So now, you said your son is three? Lashautala: He's three.

Jarma: He's three; so you don't have to get ready for transition yet -- just transition to the four-year-old class. Will you still be an active Policy Council member next year?

Lashautala: I definitely will. I think more so. I'll be more empowered because, like I said, I'm a first-time parent on the parent council, so right now -- this year I'm trying to learn and transition to see what I can do to be an effective Policy Council leader, as well as a better parent. Because a lot of times, as parents, we get frustrated because we don't know how to -- how to -- let's see, what's the word -- how to motivate our kids in a positive way, not just go watch TV or go and do this. We have to actively engage ourselves with our kids in order to get them to learn. It's more of a hands-on learning experience.

Jarma: And you're doing the right thing and taking all the right measures to do that because that is the key -- and motivation is really the key. Lashautala: Yes, yes.

Jarma: I mean, it really is because you want to help them socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively in their areas of development. And so by you doing -- being a motivated parent, you are instilling those things and you're helping to develop those areas for -- for future academic success and later in life. So what advice would you give other parents as they come to the Head Start program? How would you get them excited about it? Being an active member of, you know, Policy Council, parent committees, you know, participating in advisory committees, what would you do?

Lashautala: Well, one thing I would do is do a parent roundup with the parents and their kids and make it fun -- like a camping night that we just do activities -- fun activities. So that way the parents can see that if we take the lessons that they learn in the Head Start program, we incorporate them in home, make them fun, then our kids will become better leaders, better thinkers, better learners as they grow up through the process. And Head Start is just that -- that kickoff that they need in order to be successful throughout their school career.

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<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000151-Lashautala+Heckor+Parent+Interview-2009-SD360p/08b52b1303e73m4f476974ch48992580f0d7>