A History of the Mother-Baby Relationship Concept: Part 2
Joan Crothers, Regional Administrator of Leader Accreditation for Great Lakes Region, LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education, USA

The mother-baby relationship concept has had a long and intense history, as author Betty Crase described in an article in the previous issue of LADders (2012-2 No. 9). Rather than the concept itself, it is the way in which a mother’s personal experience needs to meet the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership which has sometimes confused Leaders and Leader Applicants.

In Leaven, Issue May-June 1979, the “New Guidelines from the Leader Applicant Department” (**See Editor’s note) were released:

**Mother-Baby Separation, Guidelines Regarding Leader Applicants**, by Mary Ann Cahill, Founder:

During a baby’s first year, we look for a mother who has had no regular, on-going commitment that takes her away from her baby. Such a commitment would be a job or class or any on-going separation that is not easily changed to suit baby’s needs.

During baby’s second year, we recognize that dad or someone else almost as close to baby, may now occasionally be able to fill in for mother for a brief period of time.

Turning two often marks an increase in independence for baby, yet separation from mother should be kept to a minimum.
We will be flexible in certifying mothers in certain rare situations involving separation from young children for serious reasons. An Applicant’s experience may be somewhat different from LLL’s philosophy due to the fact that she has had little or no access to the League, and we will take this into consideration. These files will be reviewed by the Regional Administrator of Leader Applicants.

We have no intention of acting as “big sister,” checking up on an applicant’s comings and goings.

The League will make every effort to make its position known so that the mother involved in mother-baby separation can understand why she is not certified as a Leader, yet know that she can always count on us for support in breastfeeding.

Although this document is clear and to the point, the attempt to clarify the growing confusion of Leaders and mothers inadvertently created an undue focus on numbers. Numbers can provide easy-to-follow guidelines which may check only the age of the baby; but they seldom allow for gray areas and for individual differences that we have all seen in the mothers and babies who attend our Groups or who contact us for breastfeeding help and support. Some babies are fairly independent and ready for regular separation before the third birthday; others are still not ready until well after their fourth or fifth birthday.

Leaven, Issue March-April 1982, published an article about the mother-baby relationship, “Mother-to-Mother . . . from the Leader Applicant Department.” This article attempted to address the focus on numbers by discussing extremes. Extremes included full-time employment away from baby, and the article explained that such a woman’s mothering-through-breastfeeding experience would not represent LLL philosophy. The article also explained that extremes did not mean that a mother could never be separated from her baby. The article went on to compare separation to weaning—not just from the breast itself, but from the constant need for mother’s presence.

In Leaven, Issue May-June 1986, Betty Crase wrote that the concept on the mother-baby relationship “is not meant to imply that a mother must never leave a child of any age. The sensitivity to her baby’s needs that develops in a nursing mother is the best guide to when a particular child is ready to spend time away from mother. Many little ones are fine with dad or grandma long before they would be happy being cared for by a stranger. Others are not happy without mother until their third birthday.” We know that this is still true today, more than twenty-five years after these words were written.

In the concept which reads, “In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food,” LLL considers that “early years” refers to the first three years of a baby’s life, while recognizing that the baby’s need for the mother’s presence gradually decreases during that time.

Some people think that only unhappy and fussy babies need to be with their mothers. These babies demonstrate their dependence in obvious ways. At the same time, babies and young children are designed to be with their mothers no matter how upset or happy they appear. A happy, smiling baby may need to be with his mother as much as a crying and upset baby does. For instance, a sixteen-month-old content with a babysitter still needs and is entitled to spend happy time with his mother.

As was noted in the 2010 edition of The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding (pp. 280-81):

The research-based reality is that neither one of you is built, physiologically or emotionally, for long and regular separations. Growing research from a number of different countries shows that a baby who is separated from his mother for the hours that full-time outside work requires has elevated cortisol levels—a clear sign of stress. It isn’t always easy to tell how a baby is doing; the baby who seems quiet and content in the child care center may actually have higher levels of stress hormones than the one who cries and protests.

“New Guidelines from the Leader Applicant Department” was superseded in 1998 when the LLLI Board of Directors incorporated the LLLI Prerequisites for Leadership—Guidelines for Leaders in Appendix 18 of LLLI Policies and Standing Rules. Guideline No. 11 read:

A mother who makes every effort to meet her baby’s needs for nurturing and nourishment at her breast and who has demonstrated awareness of and responsiveness to her baby’s need for her presence can fulfill the Mothering Experience Prerequisite. A mother can sometimes combine commitments that take her away from her baby with an experience of mothering through breastfeeding that is consistent with LLLI philosophy. A mother who experiences extensive, ongoing separation from her baby is unlikely to fulfill the Mothering Experience Prerequisite.
Since it was perceived that even this broader interpretation of the Mothering Experience Prerequisite (MEP) might still exclude some who would be excellent candidates for leadership, one further change was made. As Betty Crase explained in her previous LADders article, the Guidelines for Leaders were amended in 2004 to eliminate the sentence printed above in bold. In conjunction with this one-sentence change, the Board stated, “This change in wording does not affect the mothering experience prerequisite itself: all the prerequisites remain unchanged.” These Board directives continue to guide the LAD in assessing mothers’ experience with separation.

Leaders are accepting and inclusive when helping mothers and babies. Many mothers of young babies returning full-time to the workplace still find time to be actively involved in the local LLL Group, enjoying the aspect of being with their babies while learning more about breastfeeding and family life. Some have the personal traits and capability to share helpful experiences with other mothers in the Group, even though they have made choices different from the MEP. Although Leaders may initially see these mothers as candidates for leadership, thorough pre-application discussion may reveal a disparity between the MEP and these mothers’ experiences. When deciding whether a mother truly meets the prerequisites, consider those accredited Leaders who found that they did not implement LLL philosophy with their first baby, but their continued involvement with LLL led to the discovery that MEP worked with a subsequent baby.

So often, Leaders ask the LAD for numbers. In the two-way mother and baby relationship, while the mother understands numbers, clocks, and calendars, her baby understands only “now” and cannot wait or plan for “later”; her baby’s development is ongoing and relies on mother’s milk and presence. In determining whether a mother’s practical experience reflects the Mothering Experience Prerequisite, the mother’s understanding of her baby’s cues and her response to these are of more significance than clocks and calendars or numbers of feeds away from mother.

Understandably, Leaders would like to have easy-to-follow guidelines. What we have is not so easy, but hopefully it is more genuine and relevant. It applies in the same way to every Leader and to every potential Leader Applicant, no matter where she lives or which Group she attends.

**Editor’s note:** “LAD” used to stand for “Leader Applicant Department.” In 1990, it was renamed “Leader Accreditation Department.”

Joan Crothers has been a Leader in Rhode Island, USA, since 1973. In addition to being a Group Leader, she has served as CLA, RALA, Associate Director of the Leader Applicant Department, co-Director of LAD, member of the Board of Directors of LLLI, member of the International Division staff, and member of the Grievance Commission. Joan and her husband, Jim, have two grown sons, two daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren. She recently retired as a public school principal.

Excerpt from “The Changes I’ve Seen!” by Founder Edwina Froehlich [1915-2008], Leaven, April 1983:

Another factor that cannot be ignored when making choices, is that in addition to the fact that many women still have an emotional need to have a baby and are cruelly torn between the marketplace and the nursery, there exists an emotional need of the baby that remains certain and unchanging. It will not go away. It is responsible for tremendous guilt feelings on the part of many mothers. It is the fact that the baby from time immemorial depends upon the continuing presence of his mother to help him eventually develop his own self-identity. It’s expecting a lot of a baby to do it when mother is gone from him during most of his waking hours. This emotional need of baby remains steadfastly a need regardless of social changes. Mothers are aware of this and are desperately trying to meet baby’s need to the best of their ability by preserving the breastfeeding relationship with their infant in spite of daily separation due to their employment.

Though social changes have swirled around mothers and babies in my lifetime, LLL’s purpose, aligned with the unchanging need of the baby, remains the same. Twenty-six years ago we dedicated ourselves to helping mothers to initiate and preserve the breastfeeding relationship. And we haven’t changed. There was a time when many of us thought the League would no longer be needed once breastfeeding was well accepted. Now we see that there are new challenges to be faced. The threat to breastfeeding is no longer the push for supplemental formula, early solids, early weaning, or lack of acceptance in our culture. It is rather mother-baby separation.
LAD International Statistics
LAD Council

Note: LLL Germany and LLL Switzerland are no longer Affiliates; they are now Areas supported by LLL Europe. From the 2011 April SAR, their statistics are included under the column “Europe” in the first chart, “Semi-Annual Report Compilation,” and under “ID” in the second chart, “Comparison of Four Reporting Periods.”

Semi-Annual Report Compilation

* The information from the previous SAR is indicated in parentheses.

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Comparison of Four Reporting Periods
LAD Council

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New Resource!
Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit

We are happy to introduce the Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit (LARK). This is a syllabus or curriculum of application work. It has an introduction, separate chapters about each application part with corresponding resources, and a chapter about final paperwork and the transition to leadership. It can be sent as several attachments, varying in size from 1 to 12 pages. It is also available at: http://www.llleus.org/Applicants.html

LARK consists of the following files:

Introductory Material
• Title page
• Table of contents
• Introduction

Application Parts
• Part 1: Personal history
• Part 2: Breastfeeding management
• Part 3: Leadership skills and attitudes
• Part 4: Background reading/learning
• Part 5: Preview

Final Information
• Part 6: Final paperwork, transition to leadership

Some Applicants may be happier if you offer explanations in your letters without any syllabus, which is what LAD representatives have done traditionally. In that case, you might choose to copy the necessary information from LARK and paste it in your letter to the Applicant. You can personalize it to make it more like a conversation—change “the Applicant” to her name, etc. As always, we want to respect each Applicant’s learning style and tailor the work to whatever helps her.

The following is part of a sample first letter to an Applicant.

Dear Annie,

. . . If you like, I can send you an email copy of a syllabus called the Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit (LARK). It has detailed information about all parts of the application work, including some exercises and resources. LARK has seven chapters, “Introduction” and “Parts 1-6”—varying in size from 1 to 12 pages.

I have attached three introductory files. As you can see in “Introduction,” your application work consists of the following five parts:

• **Part 1, Personal History**: Discussion with me about your understanding of LLL philosophy and how it relates to your experiences.
• **Part 2, Breastfeeding Resource Guide (BRG)**: Self-directed learning about basic breastfeeding management and LLL resources.
• **Part 3, Checklist of Topics to Discuss in Preparation for LLL Leadership**: Topics to discuss with a Leader(s).
• **Part 4, Background Reading/Learning**: What reading/learning is required.
• **Part 5, Preview of Mothers’ Questions/Problems and Group Dynamics/Management**: Mothers’ questions and common situations at Series Meetings. Discuss or role-play with Leaders.

You are welcome to start your application work by focusing on any of the above five parts or by working on more than one part at the same time. **Let me know which of the above “Parts” you would like to start with** so that I can send you the relevant chapter. If you want to receive all chapters now and make your own plan, that is fine. A sample application plan is listed in “Introduction.”

If you would like to receive explanations about application work in my letters without using a syllabus, I’ll be happy to do so. Please let me know what suits you, Annie....

Kind regards,
ACLA
There is also a *Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit*—Leader’s Guide (LARK-L). You can offer LARK-L to the supporting Leader in your first letter, whether or not the Applicant wants to use LARK. [http://www.LLEUS.org/spLeaders.html](http://www.LLEUS.org/spLeaders.html)

We hope that you find LARK to be a timesaving resource that also makes reference easy for Applicants and Leaders by gathering all the information into one place. Applicants who prefer a hard copy can print it and put it in a loose-leaf notebook. “Title page” and “Table of contents” make LARK into an application handbook. Perhaps you might consider selling it at a conference. Using a loose-leaf format will allow updating of individual pages as needed.

Let us know how this new tool works for you and what you would recommend changing by contacting: [LADdersmail@gmail.com](mailto:LADdersmail@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you!

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**Weekend Applicant Workshops**

*Carroll Beckham, ACLA, North Carolina, USA*

In recent years, the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) in North Carolina, USA, has offered weekend work sessions for Leader Applicants in various locations, from the mountains to the beach. We find this a great way to help Leader Applicants get a jump-start on their journey to LLL leadership or to finish up that last task that might be a roadblock for some women.

We invite Applicants who have finished a portion of their reading or personal history to come spend all or part of a planned weekend with members of the LAD to work. After a location is chosen, local Leaders are also invited. In pairs or as a larger group, we work on any part of the application that an Applicant is ready for: personal history, *Breastfeeding Resource Guide*, exercises (Listening, Acceptance, Mixing Causes, etc.), Leader’s Handbook Checklist, and Preview. Fathers and older teens often come to help with child care.

We take care to document the tasks accomplished. If an Applicant’s LAD representative is not present, the oral personal history is recorded on audio tape. Some Applicants finish and sign their Statement of Commitment; others complete a single exercise or simply observe. Since some Applicants are just getting started while others may be ready to complete their journey, we try to tailor the work to meet their specific goals.

LAD representatives enjoy the weekends as much as Applicants, since it gives us a chance to meet as a department, make plans for conference sessions, and share in the joy of working with Applicants face-to-face. Seeing a mother interact with her children and other women is so rewarding! Evaluations of these work sessions tell us that participants enjoy them, too.

Carroll Beckham has been an LLL Leader in North Carolina, USA, for 25 years. Before joining the LAD to help mothers become Leaders, she worked in the Area Finance Department and the Communications Skills Department. She has been married for 44 years to her high school sweetheart, and she and her husband have two married daughters. Before children, she was a home economist. She later worked for a few years as an IBCLC, and is now retired.
I received the following response from a Leader Applicant the other day: “Reading your emails has already been very helpful to me, because in doing so I am seeing how to develop listening and reiterating what someone says—validating feelings and restating, etc.” This got me thinking that the way we communicate with an Applicant, in addition to what we communicate, is important. It made me realize that when I write a response to an Applicant’s personal history, I am role modeling how to respond to a mother with a helping question.

If I were to describe my communication style with Applicants, it would include the following:

1. Summarizing or restating what the Applicant wrote, so she knows I read and understood her writing.

“Being conscious of what you ate was important to you even before you had children. However, it became even more important after your first baby was born. You quickly recognized the importance of modeling good nutrition for your children.”

“For you, this concept means changing your approach to ‘loving guidance’ as your children grow and reach a new developmental stage.”

2. Validating an Applicant’s feelings.

“You recognized the need to transition your children to solids, but did it with some reluctance, because you realized that this was signaling the end of infancy and the exclusive relationship you shared with your babies in the early months. Many mothers eagerly look forward to starting solids. They see it as a milestone toward independence. You had mixed feelings.”

3. Empowering the Applicant by pointing out examples of skills she already has.

“I like how you instill confidence in mothers by saying: ‘We can fully breastfeed our babies because we are mothers; nature has already designed all for us.’”

4. Reflecting on what she has written to help her to think more deeply about the topic.

“You sound like someone who really enjoys getting to know other people. Your friends are very important to you and you value your relationships with them.”

5. Giving timely feedback.
I try to respond to Applicants within a few days and no later than a week, if possible. The Applicants I have worked with really appreciate the prompt feedback. One of them wrote:

“It certainly seems like the kind of undertaking that, if there are any large time lags, things can lose their sense of immediacy and you run the risk of finding it hard to complete. Having the LAD being so on top of things has kept me moving forward at an excellent pace.”

Giving “immediate” feedback is so much easier now than in the past. With all Applicants who have worked with me, email is the primary way we communicate. If I can’t give a detailed response immediately, at least I can acknowledge receiving her email. Another excellent way to communicate is via Google chat. When I haven’t heard from an Applicant in a while and she doesn’t seem to be responding to emails, I pick up the phone. For Applicants in other countries, Skype might be a good option.
Responding to a helping request with an empathetic statement is an important part of how we, as Leaders, communicate. I will often work on it with Applicants as I dialogue with them or if I do Preview questions with them. As I dialogue with an Applicant about her personal history writing, I might ask how she would respond to a mother’s question. I ask her specifically to write the first thing she’d say to the mother. Other times I have done practice helping emails with an Applicant whose sponsoring Leader was unavailable. I was working with one Applicant on a helping email, communicating via Google chat. She was sharing excellent information but could not seem to understand how to start with an empathetic response. Finally I wrote: “You sound frustrated because you don’t know what kind of a response I am expecting from you.” Because I identified how she was feeling, she understood that she needed to identify how the mother was feeling.

Linda Wieser went to her first LLL meeting in Nova Scotia, Canada, when Heidi (32) was nine months old and weaned. In 1984 Linda was accredited as a Leader in California, USA when Erica (29) was two years old and still nursing. Linda currently lives in Malone Bay, Nova Scotia, with her husband Jim Rosbe. Linda joined the LAD in 2008 and currently works as an ACLA with Applicants in Michigan, USA, Canada, and Future Areas in Asia and the Middle East. In addition, she has worked many years in the Professional Liaison Department and is currently Area Professional Liaison for Atlantic Canada. Linda leads with the Lunenburg County Group in Atlantic Canada.

Have you ever wondered how an isolated mother can become a Leader? A mother in a country where LLL does not exist may hear about La Leche League and visit the LLLI Web pages. Thinking About LLL Leadership? She can contact LAD International (LADI) at: LeaderAccreditation@llli.org. The LAD Council members who serve as moderators respond to emails from the LADI email address. This article tells the story of how the LADI email address is the starting point for many new Leaders around the world.

If you have an idea for the Global LAD column, please contact Alison Parkes Rnparkes.family@ntlworld.com

The LADI Email Address
Lesley Robinson,
Administrator of Leader Accreditation
for La Leche League Canada
C-DAM (CLA) for Ligue La Leche (French Canada)

In recent months the LADI email address has received enquiries from Florida to Oregon in the US, from Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Importantly, this email address has allowed mothers from countries in Future Areas to contact us, for example mothers from Ukraine, Vietnam, Kenya, Latvia, Romania, Tanzania, South Korea, India and Pakistan.

The LADI email address provides a way for interested mothers to make their first contact with LLL. These mothers are often in isolated places. They have had a good experience of breastfeeding and would like to be able to share it with others by bringing LLL to their communities. They are aware of the need for reliable breastfeeding information and support and would like to volunteer to fill that need.

We receive emails from all over the world, usually from mothers far distant from an LLL Group. For some of them the nearest LLL Group may be in another county or state; for others it may be in another country. Our response is to put these mothers in touch with the Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (CLA) of their LLL Area. Sometimes the CLA will live in the same state or country, but in some cases, she may be in another part of the world.
Early conversations with a mother new to LLL

A mother who contacts us may have had no opportunity to learn about LLL philosophy, or she may know only what she has read on our Web site or in *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* if it is available in her language. She may know nothing about what leadership involves. A mother who has not attended a Group may know nothing of the atmosphere of an LLL Group or how a Leader presents information at a Series Meeting. She may not have a clear idea of what an application for leadership would involve or how much of her time would be taken up by the application or by leadership once she is accredited.

Our first contact with such an isolated mother often involves sharing some basic information on the responsibilities of leadership, the prerequisites to applying and the work of the application. This information is clearly set out in *Thinking About LLL Leadership?* which is available without a password on the LLLI Web site at: http://www.llli.org/lad/talll/talll.html or http://www.llli.org/docs/lad/thinkingaboutleadership.pdf (compact pdf version).

Continuing the conversation: pre-application dialogue

The information in *Thinking About LLL Leadership?* may be enough to let a mother see that leadership is not for her, or she may want to know more. This would be the time to begin a more detailed pre-application discussion, answering the mother’s questions about leadership and asking her about her experience as it relates to the *LLL Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership*. The LAD representative takes on the role of recommending Leader: she needs to have detailed discussion with the mother in order to be confident to recommend her. A Leader Recommendation is one of the prerequisites to applying for leadership.

The discussion can begin by asking a mother to describe her personal breastfeeding and mothering experience. This can alert us immediately if there is no chance of a mother meeting the prerequisites, for example because of premature weaning or regular formula use. There may be additional questions to ask about a mother’s experience which will help to clarify how she may meet the prerequisites, for example if we can give special consideration to a breastfeeding experience which is outside the realm of a normal course of breastfeeding.

Once we have established that a mother meets the breastfeeding and mothering prerequisites, we can delve more deeply to ascertain that she meets the organisational prerequisite by asking her to write about LLL philosophy. This can be time consuming both for the LAD representative and for the mother, but a thorough discussion of the concepts at this stage can save time later on. What the mother writes about the concepts can serve as the basis for the dialogue on her personal history. It is important for her, as a potential representative of LLL, to feel completely comfortable with the philosophy of the organisation.

The face of LLL in the local community

The mothers who contact us in this way are always enthusiastic and eager to answer our questions. Despite the fact that they don’t yet know LLL very well, they have already made a commitment to volunteering for their communities and hope that they will be able to bring LLL to them. Unfortunately we are not always able to say yes to them, even though we may feel sad that we cannot overlook issues with the prerequisites. It is particularly important when a mother will be the face of LLL in her community (or even her country), that her experience is an example of LLL philosophy in action. We have had enquiries from mothers who had been given erroneous information that prevented them from having the breastfeeding experience they had hoped for. They may wish that they had known then what they know now. We may feel saddened to have to say no to them, but we cannot make exceptions.

Positive outcomes when a mother does not meet the prerequisites

Some of the mothers who have contacted us recently have a professional interest in bringing LLL to their communities. They may be lactation consultants or social workers who are highly aware of the need for LLL. Nevertheless we can only accept applications from women who meet the prerequisites.

Despite the fact that a mother may not be able to pursue leadership, the contact with LLL is still beneficial. There may be other things mothers can do to help mothers in their communities, even if there is no established LLL Group for them to join. They can read LLL materials and suggested books and they can share these materials with others. Their reading may help them prepare
to apply for leadership in the future. They can encourage others to apply. They can establish a non-LLL group for mothers until such time as a member can apply for LLL leadership. They may decide to become lactation consultants or breastfeeding counsellors with other organisations. There is always something positive that comes out of the contact.

LLL pioneers in isolated communities
A number of the isolated mothers who have contacted us this way have indeed gone on to become Leader Applicants. They tend to be highly motivated Applicants who work meticulously and efficiently towards accreditation. We are grateful to these special pioneering women for all that they bring to LLL and to their communities.

Lesley Robinson lives with her husband, Mark, in Ottawa, Canada. Their three grown children, Kate (born 1985 and studying in Cape Town, South Africa), Alex (1987, going to graduate school in New York), and Will (1989, at university in Canada), have flown the nest. Lesley was accredited in 1987 and has been a LAD representative since 1991. She is currently Administrator of Leader Accreditation (ALA) for La Leche League Canada and C-DAM (CLA) for Ligue La Leche (French Canada).

How Would You Respond?

Here is an extract from a letter from a Group Leader written to her LAD representative. There is no single right answer. Sharing our own possible approaches can help us to consider a variety of ways to respond.

Dear CLA,
There is a lovely mother in our Group whom I would like to recommend as a Leader Applicant, but my co-Leader is not sure. She feels that Sarah’s mothering is not in line with LLL philosophy because she has encouraged her baby to feed to a schedule rather than “on demand,” and the baby started sleeping through the night at eight months. Would this rule Sarah out of becoming a Leader Applicant?

Regards,
Anne Leader

Sample Responses

It is a challenge when there are disagreements between Leaders about a possible Leader Applicant. Each Leader is entitled to her opinion, and it is important for the recommending Leader to consider seriously the concerns raised by the other Leader. Is it possible for you and your co-Leader to spend some time in discussion? I suggest using the Leader’s Handbook Chapter 5, pages 135-52, as a basis for guiding your discussions. You could explore whether the prospective Applicant’s philosophy, experience, and skills match requirements for the job of Leader. This may help illuminate any discrepancy between the mother’s ideas, experience, or attitudes about “encouraging baby to feed to a schedule rather than ‘on demand’” and the prerequisites to applying for LLL leadership. The Leaders need to identify concerns clearly and specifically. It often helps to write them down. Look at how Sarah has encouraged her baby to feed to a schedule and to sleep through the night at eight months. Is the way she did it in line with LLL philosophy? Is she responsive to her baby’s need for her presence? How does she talk about this at LLL meetings? Is she able to empathise with others with differing practices?

Having been specific about concerns and clearly identified specific areas of “mismatch” between Leaders, you may find that it is not an issue. Conversely, it may still be. The Leaders may decide at this point to hold off approaching this mother about leadership for a month or two in order to observe how she participates within the Group. At meetings, does she actively promote “scheduled” rather than “on cue” feeding? Is she respectful and empathetic of mothers with differing opinions? Could you informally discuss this issue at a committee or enrichment session, quietly noting how she joins in the discussion? It may be that her use of words implies more than what she actually does.

Remember that you can consult the Coordinator of Leader Accreditation in your Area. She is there to support and help you, too. If this is still not resolved, maybe you could both decide to wait for a longer period of time to approach this mother. Or, what about writing two separate Leader Recommendations if you feel that apart from this one area, she would be a great LLL Leader? If at this stage there is still
disagreement between Leaders, you could try to gain clarification by discussing this with the mother using the Leader’s Pre-Application Packet [http://www.lleus.org/splLeaders.html](http://www.lleus.org/splLeaders.html) as a guide. I hope this resolves the issue satisfactorily for all.

Sue Sutton, New Zealand

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How nice that Sarah has been such an asset to your Group that you would like to recommend her as a Leader Applicant. Your co-Leader does, however, raise some valid concerns. It would be helpful to know more about Sarah’s scheduling of her baby’s nursings. Perhaps her definition of scheduling is not tied to watching the clock and strictly adhering to set lengths of time. Is your co-Leader concerned that Sarah’s baby sleeping through the night at eight months is related to scheduled breastfeeding?

When a mother is interested in applying for leadership and a Leader would like to sponsor her, it is important that they spend some time together discussing each of the ten LLL concepts in depth and exploring how each has been a part of the interested mother’s breastfeeding and mothering experiences. The concept says, “Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.” In part that means that closeness to an attentive mother who is sensitive to his cries encourages the development of communication skills between mother and baby and builds the baby’s sense of trust. At the same time, mother, through frequent and intimate interaction with her baby, has ample opportunity to get to know her baby as an individual and learn from him how to read his cries and meet his needs. If cues from the baby that he wants to nurse do not produce an offered breast, is the mother in complete agreement with this concept? The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding (page 135) speaks of “conversational nursing” as the baby’s first communication with the mother and states that you can hold these conversations “whenever you and your baby like.”

If Sarah has not already approached you expressing a desire to become a Leader, it would be essential to learn exactly what her definition of scheduling is and how it fits into La Leche League philosophy before an application is begun. At the same time, let her know how much you appreciate and value her as an active and contributing member of your Group.

Darlene Utzinger, USA

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How would you respond? Send your suggested reply or an extract you would like to share with other LAD representatives to Eleanor Becker at: ellleanorbecker@gmail.com

Dear CLA,

I have been reflecting on the statement “Breast milk is the superior infant food” and I wholeheartedly agree. I feel that it is important to discuss what it is superior to. Breast milk is in fact the default infant food and we really shouldn’t have to defend it. I think it is really more relevant to focus on the dangers of breast milk substitutes and what damage they can do to babies’ and mothers’ health. I feel very proud that I was able to breastfeed even though I had quite a few hurdles to overcome, and I am sure that most mothers would put in the extra effort required to give their babies the best start if they were properly informed of the hazards of not breastfeeding.

Regards,
Lucy Applicant

How would you respond? Send your suggested reply or an extract you would like to share with other LAD representatives to Eleanor Becker at: ellleanorbecker@gmail.com
A Taste of LAD International

Heather Johnson, Idaho, USA

My name is Heather Rae Johnson. I met my one true love while I was a senior in high school and I knew he was the one for me. We met December 11, 1999, and we were married on September 30, 2000. My husband, Nash, has graduated from school after seven years and we have moved to Twin Falls, Idaho, USA. We are enjoying a life without school and exploring our new town.

I went to my first LLL meeting after my baby had become stuck in a breech position and we were planning on a cesarean. I was very concerned about how I would be received at the meeting as I had some uncomfortable experiences with extended family. The Leader smiled and offered information about c-sections and was very positive about how breastfeeding would work. She told me I was the mother and knew my body and baby better than anyone else. Karin gave me the courage and confidence to be the mother I am now. So I kept going to meetings and loved it. I gained a little bit of confidence every time I went, and I learned more from the mothers’ examples around me than I ever could have on my own.

When my beautiful daughter, Anya, weaned at 18 months, I was 20 weeks along with our little boy, Emory. Emory was born at 30 weeks by emergency c-section. He stayed in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) for seven weeks and I pumped a lot of breast milk for him. Emory came home fully breastfeeding. RaeLee was born at 33 weeks, also by emergency c-section. We discovered she had a heart murmur and we had to try hard to persuade her doctors to preserve our nursing relationship. After her stay in the NICU, she came home fully breastfeeding! If it hadn’t been for LLL, I would not have been able to stand firm on my knowledge of the importance of having my baby at my breast. Sari was born at 36 1/2 weeks by a scheduled c-section. She was strong and healthy. Anya is now eleven and she is our joy. Emory is now our rambunctious, full-of-fun nine-year-old. RaeLee is our curious, giggly six-year-old. Sari is now three and a half, testing her limits, and can be the sweetest little thing on earth.

I have been a CLA for LLL Idaho, USA, for a year now and really enjoy working with all of the Leader Applicants. I try to stress the effect they can have on the mothers in their Groups. It is so important to be accepting of those mothers who come with experiences different than our own. We can learn as much from those mothers as they can learn from us. As Leaders we are here to encourage and inspire. To do that, most of the time we have to step out of our own comfort zones and give mothers a chance to do the same.

Thank you, LLL, for showing me how to be a mother!
My name is Shiuh-jane Lin. More than thirteen years ago, I met LLL in Taipei in Taiwan. Now my children are 14, 12, and 8, living with my husband and me in Hualien, which is located on the east coast of Taiwan. I have been a Leader for five years, and I now co-lead the LLL Hualien Group.

I met Toshi Jolliffe, my support person in the LAD, just at the point when she needed some help in understanding Chinese. Working with Toshi on translations has been interesting. And learning variable experiences from other mothers is inspiring. Stories or perspectives from breastfeeding mothers especially interest me.

I just completed my LAD orientation. It helps me see a wider picture of supporting an Applicant. I look forward to introducing more Leader accreditation information to Chinese Leaders and mothers.

In the “congratulations” letter to a newly accredited Leader, some LAD representatives include contact information for Area administrators such as the Area Coordinator of Leaders, the Professional Liaison contact, Finance Coordinator/Area Treasurer, and Coordinator of Leader Accreditation. It also helps to add a brief reminder of how each of them can help the new Leader in her work as a Leader.
Congratulations on your appointment!

Katherine Ascarrunz  ACLA, Future Areas in South America (FAiSA)—for Uruguay
Nicole Bell   ACLA, Central and Southern Ontario, Canada
Valeria Calderón   ACLA, FAiSA—for Paraguay and Venezuela
Cecilia Carregall   Co-CLA, Argentina
Rita Elena Garza   ACLA, México
Nicola Geoghegan-Morphet ACLA, Central and Southern Ontario, Canada
Dunia Guerrero   ACLA, FAiSA—for Perú and Ecuador
Alexis Heimbach   ACLA, Pennsylvania West, USA
Sarah Kersey   ACLA, Pennsylvania West, USA
Kimberley MacKenzie   CLA, Quebec and Eastern Ontario, Canada
Valerie Marique   ACLA, France
Flore Marquis-Diers   ACLA, France
Zulma de Noriega   CLA, Guatemala
Angela Orenczak   ACLA, Georgia, USA
Jenny Perez-Genge ACLA, FAiSA—for Chile and Brasil
Eugenia Ramirez   CLA, FAiSA; ACLA for Colombia
Melinda Ring   CLA, Kentucky-Tennessee, USA
Rosalie Sarasua   ACLA, Quebec and Eastern Ontario, Canada
Allyson Shames   RALA, LAD West, USA
Daniela Ulloa   ACLA, FAiSA—for Bolivia
Carrie Wright   ACLA, Texas, USA

What keeps a LAD representative excited about her work? What enables her to open her umpteenth application file with pleasure and anticipation? To receive an application file is to receive something very precious: a mother has expressed her willingness and her desire to become an LLL Leader. She may have one child or several. She may be young and enthusiastic or perhaps “seasoned” and determined. To open her file is to open a window on her life and her experience of breastfeeding and mothering.

Just as we are fascinated by the inviting glow of light from windows as we walk along a residential street at night, so the glow from the window of an application file can fascinate and warm us. We also know that a mother’s life is likely to be forever changed by her application for leadership, and that we will be instrumental in facilitating that change. The result will be a Leader who is ready to represent LLL and to support other breastfeeding mothers. For some Leaders it will make a huge difference to the breastfeeding support available where they live; it may even mean the beginning of LLL in a new village, town, city or country.
Soon you will receive an application file. Whether it is your first application or your hundredth, inside is a story waiting to be told, and you are the person destined to hear that story. Relax in your chair and savour this moment: prepare to be excited by a new application for leadership and warmed by its glow.

Thank you for your conscientious work helping mothers and Applicants. You are directly contributing to the future of La Leche League.

LAD Council