Engaging Families: Cultivating and Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

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Today’s Discussion

• Introductions and Opening Activity
• What the research tells us
  • Defining Family Engagement
  • Why is it important
  • Multiple Frameworks

• One Family’s Story

• Principles and practices that support Collaborative Partnership with Families
• Types of family Engagement

• Closing activity
  • Video
Family Engagement Defined

“A reciprocal partnership between parents, staff and programs that reflects a shared responsibility to foster children's development and learning [at home, school or in the community].”

Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009
Family Engagement Defined

• Refers to the systematic inclusion of families in the planning and development of activities and programs, decision making and evaluation of activities, programs and systems.

  • SHARED POWER

  • CO-CREATION

  • DOING WITH
Family Engagement Research

- **Growing knowledge base** Publications and academic papers (5 times as many in past 10 years)
- Family Engagement is increasingly cited as a **critical aspect of high quality early care** and **K-12 education**
- Family engagement (contact with families and participation in school activities) facilitates **children’s school success**
Studies link frequent contact and parent school participation to social, behavioral, and academic well-being in young children (McWayne et al., 2004: Seginer, 2006)

Family engagement reciprocally benefits staff who report more job satisfaction, higher morale and more confidence about their work when they have strong relationships with families (Epstein; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Swick, 2004)
Multiple Family Engagement Frameworks

- Dept. of Education’s Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships
- Center for Parent, Family and Community Engagement
- Center for the Study of Social Policy’s (CSSP) Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors
- Epstein’s Framework on Parent Involvement
No More Random Acts of Family Engagement

- Specific
- Intentional
- Rigorous
- Measurable
Principles and Practices that Support Family Partnerships
Children grow up in families and families live in communities:

- The Ecology of Child Development (Urie Bronfenbrenner)

- **The spirit of this approach:**
  - Family as foundation
  - Community as more that a place or space
  - Mutual respect
  - Appreciation Of culture
  - Value of partnerships
Development of a respectful and trusting partnership

- Cultural, linguistic and socio-economic responsiveness
- Strength-based orientation
- Individualization and flexibility
- Alignment with family preferences/goals/aspirations
- Alignment to child goals and outcomes
- Equality of family and staff/practitioner roles
From Involving, to Engaging, to Partnering

UNIDIRECTIONAL         RECIPROCAL         MUTUAL         SHARED

TO FAMILIES             FOR FAMILIES        WITH FAMILIES
NOT ABOUT ME,
WITHOUT ME
Principles of Trusting Partnerships

- Communication—Often and truthfully
- Competency
- Respect
- Commitment
- Equalize the planning field—Parent as Expert
- Advocate
One Family’s Story
Maria Jacinto
Types of Family Engagement Activities

- Meeting families’ ‘basic needs
- Parenting Support
- Referring to and evaluating for services and supports
- Individualizing, developing and providing services and supports
- Extending child’s learning in home and community
- Encouraging families’ participation and volunteering in the program/school and community
- Advocating for systems improvement
- Parent Leadership training

- Collaborating with the community

Others…………………………
Staff and Family Partnership Outcomes

• Parents will engage as:
  • Supporters
  • Encouragers
  • Creators of structures/routines
  • Monitors
  • Models
  • Advocates/leaders
  • Partners/collaborators
  • Decisionmakers

Source: Mapp, 2013
Staff and Family Partnership Outcomes

Staff will be able to:

• Enter into a respectful and reciprocal relationship with families
• Honor and recognize families’ existing knowledge and skills
• Create and sustain a program culture that is inviting, welcoming and promotes family engagement
• Develop family engagement and learning activities that connect parents to children's development

Source: Mapp, 2013
• Given your community context and your position or role, identify the family engagement principle/practice that resonates with you as having the biggest impact on families and children in your community?

• What specific action could be taken to address this?
“I’ve learned that people will forget what you have said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou, American Poet
Let’s change the world


• 1 Connors-Tadors & Ramsburg, 2008; McWayne, 2016; Ginsburg-Block, 2010

• 2 Dearing et al., 2006; Downer & Myers, 2009; Epstein, 2001)

• 3 Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009

• 4 U.S. Department of Health and Human services, Administration for children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center for Parent, Family and community Engagement, 2019

• Not About Me, without Me: Raising Parent Voice to Guide Early Childhood Policy North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (December 2017).
Additional Resources


• *ECTA Center Early Childhood Technical Assistance 2017, Principles of trusting partnership.