ECE Credential

Level 1

Module 5: Family and Community Relationships
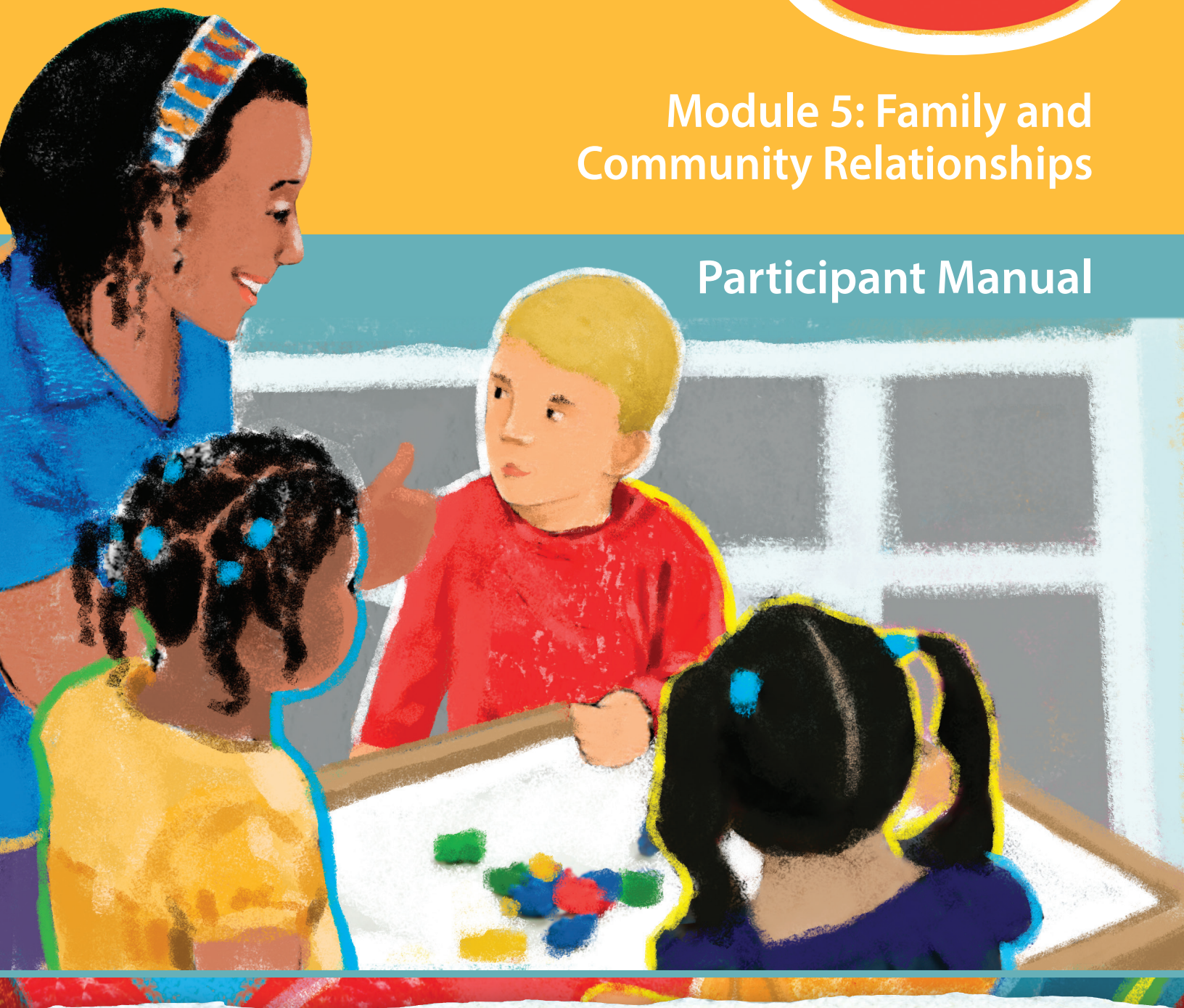
Participant Manual

ECE Credential Level 1 Training

Module 5: *Family and Community Relationships*

Participant Manual · Standardized Version

This training is Registry-approved and counts towards DCFS licensed program training hours.

Disclaimer

Acknowledgments

ECE Credential Level 1 Training *Module 5:* *Family and Community Relationships*

Table of Contents

Resources

Learning Objectives

Following this training, participants will be able to:

- Describe the importance of the family and its diverse cultures, structures, members and roles

- Name ways to involve families in the child care program

- Describe techniques for positive communication and developing relationships with families

Self-Reflection

Name or topic of your last module: _____

Reflect upon the last module you attended and answer the following. If this is your first module, you are not required to complete this section.

What new skills have you started practicing or what changes have you made as a result of the training?

_____

_____

_____

What has worked? What hasn't?

_____

_____

_____

What resources did you use from the training?

_____

_____

_____

What other knowledge did you gain as a result of the training?

_____

_____

_____

Part 1: Seeing Strengths in Families

Providers play an ongoing important role in the lives of the children in their care. It is very important to remember, though, that parents and families are first and foremost experts on their children.

Families of all sizes and types have unique strengths. By getting to know the families of the children in your care, you can build a positive lasting relationship and partnership. This partnership allows the child or children in care to feel safe, which in turns leads to positive social-emotional development.

What is a Family?

My definition:

_____

_____

_____

We Need To Remember

- Children are born _____
- Children learn from those they _____
- Parents are the experts on their children
- Parents deserve support in their parenting roles
- Value diversity and cultural _____
- All parents want to be _____ parents

Parent – provider partnerships are important for everyone involved. Child care is a consistent and ongoing service to families. Providers are in a unique position, because of the day to day contact with parents, to provide support and respond to families ongoing needs is essential.

A child senses if his parent is comfortable with the caregiver. If the parent has a strong, respectful, relationship with the caregiver, chances are the child will as well. Partnerships between parents and caregivers lead to strong relationships between child and parent and child and caregiver.

Strength-Based Attitudes

An attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about someone or something that is often reflected in a person's behavior. Our attitudes create a frame of mind that shapes how we behave in our personal and professional life. Attitudes are shaped by experiences, beliefs, and assumptions. When we begin our interactions with positive attitudes, we tend to see families in a more positive light, giving us a strong foundation to build our partnership.

In contrast, when we approach our interactions with negative attitudes, we are more likely to see fault, make negative judgments, and expect a negative outcome. Adopting a positive attitude does not mean avoiding challenges and only talking about positive observations and ideas. Instead it is adopting a frame of mind that begins with a family's strengths.

Beginning with strength-based attitudes to express our belief that all families can make progress and that we are ready to strive for better outcomes together leads to stronger relationships.

- All parents want to be a _____ parent
- Families are the first and most important _____ of their children
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their family's _____
- Families are the _____ on their child(ren)
- Families' _____ are important and valued

Family Strengths Line Drawing

What are some family strengths shown in this picture?

_____

_____

Strength-Based Focus

- Increases engagement

- Creates _____ teams

- Improves the overall interactions and learning

- Restores _____

- By showing appreciation for what one does, we find the energy to tackle the issues

Showing appreciation and acknowledging a parent's assets will open the lines of communication. For example, telling a parent, "I appreciate that your children are always dressed for the weather."

Strength-Based Conversation Starters
The foundation to building relationships begins with starting off on the right foot with our conversations.

> *How do you comfort your child?*

> *Tell me what works at home when you see this behavior.*

> *How can you tell your baby enjoys an activity?*

Perspective Taking

Considering the family's perspective is extremely helpful when there may be cultural differences in child-rearing practices, value differences in the roles in a family, or belief system.
Encourage and invite families to share their thoughts, insights, and observations. Follow up conversations by acknowledging the child's growth, change in behavior, or your own observations.

- Be aware of your own _____, judgments, and assumptions

- How do these biases, judgments, and assumptions affect interactions with families?

- Find common _____ and work/build from that.

- Make time for reflection

- Before sharing your views, ask families to share theirs

My reflection thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Focus on the Family-Child Relationship

- Welcome families to _____ your program

- Share observations of parent-child interactions

- Reinforce how much the family means to the child

- _____ to the parents

Strong parent-child relationships link with positive learning and social outcomes for children. Parents need to know that their relationship with their child is valued and supported by program staff.

Value the Family's Passion

- Providers and staff may have _____ ideas about what a family needs.

- Shared goals are _____ outcomes for the family.

- Resolve differences, share worries and _____ successes.

Taking Time to Learn Family Stories

Family stories provide an opportunity to learn about what factors such as language, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, family structures, sexual orientation and community mean to the family (Kaser and Short, 1998).

Stories can give vital information on how to create an environment that includes culturally responsive teaching practices (Kidd, Sanchez, and Thorp, 2002).

Your Own Family Story
Directions: With a partner, generate three questions that you feel would provide interesting information for a family story. Then, ask your partner the questions and have them respond, telling you some of their family story.

Notes:

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

Family Empowerment and Partnerships

When building relationships and forming a partnership remember:

- Parents are a child's first teacher

- Parents are the experts on their child

- All parents desire to be "good" parents

- All parents desire to raise "good" children

Focusing on a family's strengths will help in building relationships and opening the lines of communication. Remember, all families have a culture unto themselves. We all come from different cultural backgrounds, have different religious beliefs and family styles, and even live in different communities.

These factors all impact how we work with children. Each child and each parent deserves to be understood and treated as an individual. A respect for other cultures is essential for you as a child care provider.

Part of being partners with parents/guardians is asking about their culture and customs so you can demonstrate respect for culture in the care you provide for their children.

Language is also a part of culture. It is fine, even beneficial, for children to live and speak two languages. Try to understand and support the home language as best as you can.

What is a Partnership?

- Both parties contribute _____

- There is give and take– _____

- _____ communication

- _____ decision-making

Forming a Partnership Requires:

- Trust

- Sharing _____

- _____ parents

Showing respect, maintaining confidentiality, encouraging, and communication are tools/strategies for building trust. For some families this will take a great deal of time. Don't give up!

Support comes in many forms. For some parents/guardians, your service being available is support enough. Other families may need support in their parenting skills, etc. You need to be aware of your resources and those in your communities so you can offer the appropriate support to parents.

What are Ways to Develop a Partnership?

List some steps the caregiver and family can take to build a partnership.

Caregiver	Family

What are Barriers to Developing Partnerships?

What are some things parents or caregivers may do that could prevent forming a partnership

Caregiver	Family

Understanding the Partnership with Parents

- Parents experience a variety of emotions when using child care.

- Parents come with their own life circumstances, values, attitudes, and experiences.

- Parents and caregivers are a wonderful resource for each other.

- Open and effective communication is important.

Try to understand the family's point of view. Remember, we see the children when they arrive at our door, but we need to remember they have already had several hours of living with their families will impact how they are when they arrive. They may have gotten up at 6 a.m. and had a long bus ride before they even get to you.

It is difficult to parent a child. It is difficult to go back to school or back to work after having a baby. We want to let parents know that we understand how hard this is and that we want to make the transition to child care as smooth as possible.

When parents/guardians and child care providers partner in the care of the child, parents can gain a feeling of relief and support. Mutual understanding, respect, acceptance and agreement are critical for parents to feel comfortable in their role and with the child care provider.

Building Partnerships Through Communication

What does good communication look like?

_____

_____

_____

What interferes with good communication with parents?

_____

_____

_____

A Note on Home Visits

Home visits can be a wonderful way to establish an initial connection. The initial home visit can serve as a means to gather family stories. Regular home visits that are part of the program philosophy or curriculum may be carried out by staff members other than the provider/teacher. Setting aside time to reflect and discuss these visits will enable all to gain a clearer perspective on the family.

This is a great way to establish communication and learn about family culture

It is essential to:

- Plan the visit carefully, paying attention to _____

- _____ the purpose of your visit up front with family

- Plan greetings, _____ , and information to share

- Listen to family _____ and use these to learn about cultural framework and communication style

- _____-_____ with families after home visit

Video—Home Visits

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sustaining Relationships

Reflection on our work with families allows us to:

- Understand how our own experiences and beliefs influence our work

- Sharpen our observation and communication skills with children and families

- Improve our skills in building mutually respectful partnerships with families

- Enhance our ability to communicate and build relationships with peers and community partners

Video—Partnerships for Change, Listening to the Voices of Families

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Child Care

What Parents Should Expect from Providers

- Ongoing communication opens access to the home or center, and frequent updates on your child's progress.

- Loving care, responsiveness, stimulation, and attention to building your child's self-esteem.

- A safe and healthy environment.

- Honesty. Caregivers should share information about problems or accidents. They should pay income taxes and meet all legal requirements.

- Acceptance of your wishes on matters such as discipline, seat belt/car seat usage, TV watching, food, toilet training, smoking, etc.

- Advance notice of changes, such as in hours or costs. You should have between a month and six weeks notice if a caregiver can no longer care for your child.

- Support for your family. Caregivers should not be critical of your family's lifestyle or values and should not be involved in family disputes. They should respect your religious beliefs and cultural background.

- Acceptance of you as the most important person in your child's life. Advice should be offered in a non-critical way.

- Assurance that everyone in contact with your child is trustworthy, properly trained, and continuously supervised. This includes caregiver's friends and relatives, custodial help, transportation workers and visitors.

- No surprises. Your child-care provider shouldn't suddenly announce that her teenage daughter will be watching your children three afternoons per week, nor should a favorite day-care teacher disappear without explanation.

Provided by:

Prevent Child Abuse Missouri
621 E. McCarty, Suite E,
Jefferson City, MO 65101

1-800-CHILDREN

What Providers Should Expect from Parents

- **Open communication.** You should clearly explain your wishes and provide information on problems, on changes at home, and about your child's routine, activities, and preferences.

- **Agreement on terms and arrangements** (fees, hours, etc.) in writing.

- **Honesty and trust.** Show your trust by asking questions and not jumping to conclusions when you have a concern.

- **Advance notice.** Provide a month to six weeks' notice of changes in your child-care plans.

- **Consistency.** Pick up your child on time and follow through on agreements. If you are to supply diapers or other items, bring them before they are needed.

- **Healthy children.** Agree in advance about when you can and cannot bring a sick child.

- **Payment on time.** Your caregiver provides for his/her family with this income.

- **Respect your caregiver as a professional.** Taking care of children is his/her profession and a demanding job. Value your caregiver because he or she is an important person in your child's life.

- **Understanding and support for your child's feelings toward his/her caregiver.** A child who spends hours with a caregiver should love that person, but this should not diminish how your child feels about you.

- **No surprises.** Caregivers don't like surprises any more than parents.

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Part 2: Communicating with Families

Our work with families should be that of a partnership. We want to come together with parents/guardians as equals instead of as a provider or teacher knowing everything and passing that information to a parent.

In a partnership, both parties contribute equally. When there is give and take on each person's part, it is easier for each to do the job well, and it is better for the children.

Video—Daily Communication with Parents

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Messages to Families

Good communication is essential to building good partnerships with parents and families. Families want to know details about their children's experiences during the day- everything to what and how much they ate, to who and what they played with, as well as how they reacted to experiences.

Informal

- _____ at drop-off time

- Saying _____ at the end of care

Formal

- Daily communication form

- Journal

- _____

- Program/classroom website

- Newsletter (electronic or paper)

- _____ to families

- Articles of interest

- Notices

Using several forms and methods of communication, both formally and informally, will help to build relationships with families since no two families are alike or communicate in the same way.

Communicating with Parents Using Technology

- Website
- Email
- Twitter
- Texting

A Parent/Guardian-Caregiver Phrase Book

Most parents/guardians and caregivers not only understand the unique language of young children, some even begin to speak it: "Lauren's been wanting her underbunder at naptime," a parent/guardian says, and the caregiver nods, needing no translation. At naptime Lauren sleeps peacefully with her security blanket. Communication flows.

At other times, when parents/guardians and caregivers talk to each other, only an interpretive phrase book would help. Sometimes what is said, what is heard, and what is meant are three entirely different things.

A critical remark from one adult to another, especially at the end of a hard day, can hurt. That's when a phrase book would come in handy. Parents/guardians and caregivers might find that some well-intentioned comments are misunderstood. Like phrase books for travelers, an imaginary Parent/Guardian-Caregiver Phrase Book would be divided into sections.

Part I: Caregiver to Parent/Guardian

A. Caregiver says: "Be sure to check the table by the front door. There's a new hand-out on discipline there."

  Parent/guardian thinks: "Uh-oh, what did he do now?"

  Caregiver possibly meant: "We've been worried that our philosophy about discipline at the center wasn't clear. This article really explains what we believe."

B. Caregiver says: "She's been fine all day! She just started crying when you came in the door."

  Parent/guardian thinks: "My baby wants to stay with the teacher. She doesn't like me."

  Caregiver possibly meant: "Please don't think I would let her cry all day. She's so relieved to see you."

C. Caregiver says: "He seemed a little cold when we went outside today, so we found an extra sweatshirt for him."

  Parent/guardian thinks: "She's saying I don't send him with warm enough clothes."

  Caregiver possibly meant: "We want to keep communication open. Sometimes we mention unimportant things just so you'll have a feel for his day."

Part II: Parent/Guardian to Caregiver

A. Parent/guardian says: "Why Tommy, who taught you to do that?" (Said while wiping spit from her left shoe.)

Caregiver thinks: "Does she think I showed him how to spit as a part of our curriculum? Is she implying that we encourage children to spit at one another as a form of self expression?"

Parent/caregiver possibly meant: "How embarrassing! I hope she doesn't think we let him spit at home!"

B. Parent/guardian says: "I'd love to have your job—nothing but play all day."

Caregiver thinks: "What a put down. If he only knew what skill and training this job takes."

Parent/caregiver possibly meant: "I miss my child. I wish I could play with her all day. You do like your job, don't you?"

C. Parent/guardian says: "Wow. They sure are wound up today!"

Caregiver thinks: "She's saying I can't control my class."

Parent/caregiver possibly meant: "You sure have lots of patience. How do you do it?"

It's possible, of course, that you really are trying to tell your child's caregiver that her class seems up for grabs. And it's possible that she is giving you that discipline handout for a very pointed reason!

But maybe not.

How can you find out? Phrase books really aren't necessary of course.

Mixed Messages Scenarios

Scenario 1

Situation	Provider View	Family View
After careful observations over time, you are concerned that a toddler's language is delayed. You suggest an evaluation by a speech specialist. The parents fail to make an appointment.	If a problem exists, it should be identified as early as possible. Parents should want to get all the help they can for the child.	My child is fine. There's nothing wrong.

Recommendations/resolution respecting both sides:

_____

_____

Scenario 2

Situation	Provider View	Family View
The mother of a toddler unzips her daughter's coat and hangs it in her cubby. Knowing that the child can do that herself, you say, "Keisha, you know how to unzip and hang up your coat! Tomorrow, show your Mommy you can do things for yourself!"	Developing personal care skills and developing independence are important objectives for children. Keisha's mother is treating her like a baby.	Helping my child is one way I show her how much her family loves her. I want to care for her, especially just before I say goodbye for the day. There's plenty of time for her to learn to take care of herself.

Recommendations/resolution respecting both sides:

_____

_____

Scenario 3

Situation	Provider View	Family View
A 6-month-old infant new to your care setting sometimes has a difficult time falling asleep. You have been rocking him gently until he falls asleep.	By rocking and having a personal connection with the new infant, you are sending the message that the child is valued and has positive attachments.	We don't want our son to be dependent on others to fall asleep. When he's at home he doesn't have a problem falling asleep in his own bed.

Recommendations/resolution respecting both sides:

_____

_____

Scenario 4

Situation	Provider View	Family View
A family requests that you continue their at home practice of toilet training their 12-month-old child. They explain how they are aware of when their child has to go potty and they manage to get him to the potty in time.	"Catching" a child in time to bring him to the potty is not toilet learning. Children let us know when they have the muscle control and awareness to use the toilet.	It is important for us to train our children to use the toilet at this age. We did it with our other children and it worked just fine.

Recommendations/resolution respecting both sides:

_____

_____

Scenario 5

Situation	Provider View	Family View
When you first meet the boyfriend of a toddler's mother, he tells you that he doesn't understand why you don't spank the children when they misbehave.	You teach children to be gentle with others by modeling gentleness and guiding their behavior in positive way. You stop children when they hit others and show them how to verbalize their thoughts and feelings instead of hitting.	It worked for me when I was a child, so it should work now too.

Recommendations/resolution respecting both sides:

_____

_____

Preventing Misunderstandings

One tool caregivers can use to prevent misunderstandings is to have clear written policies on:
>Educational philosophies
>Discipline
>Hours of operation
>Illness
>Drop off/pick up
>Payment

When Conflicts and Misunderstandings Do Happen…

- Listen

- Avoid judgmental and defensive attitudes

- Say what you mean clearly and respectfully

- Use problem solving techniques:
    - Identify the problem
    - Brainstorm solutions together
    - Discuss pros/cons of the solutions
    - Decide
    - Act
    - Evaluate

Resolving Differences

A quality child care provider has the ability to develop a genuinely caring relationship with each child in her care. Parent/guardian and care provider relationships have not been noted directly as quality indicators, but the connection is apparent. The development of the respectful, close relationship between the parent and the care provider gives the child the love and sense of security that is needed for him to grow up securely attached. In building a partnership, any kind of partnership, effort and commitment is required. There needs to be open communication to achieve mutual understanding, respect, acceptance and agreement.

In any relationship, there may be times when there is a difference of opinions, a misunderstanding or disagreement. By previously working to get to know each other, having ongoing communication, and having clear expectations, you can help to alleviate differences of opinions, misunderstandings or disagreements. There may come a time when a serious issue will arise and you will need to work with the parent to resolve the problem.

It is important that both you and the parent/guardian:

- Listen well, listen for understanding, and listen for feeling behind the words.
- Avoid judgmental attitudes, blame, criticism and defensiveness. These work to create and fuel conflict, not to resolve it.
- Say what you mean clearly and respectfully.

When parents/guardians and care providers have established a relationship where they value each other's point of view, there is a way for open-minded problem solving to occur. Care providers and parents will do things differently. It takes a while to realize that there are different approaches and that there is more than one way to do something.

When care providers disagree, there are three courses of action that can be taken:

- Face the problem and work it out
- Let an issue go and ignore it
- Decide things are unworkable and end the relationship

Used with permission from Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc.

Problem Solving Tip Sheet

STEP ONE: State the problem.

STEP TWO: Listen to the parent's explanation.

- As you listen to the parent, try to hear the meaning behind the words.

- Listen for understanding.

- Listen for feeling.

Many times, the problem stated isn't the real problem. Parents bring many underlying feelings of guilt, stress, jealousy and many times a sense of loss to the caregiving relationship.

STEP THREE: Check your understanding of the problem.

As you listen, be open-minded. How you handle any blame or criticism will establish the tone of the conversation. Restate what you hear the parent state as the problem.

STEP FOUR: Share your thoughts and feelings about the problem. Say what you mean clearly and respectfully. Express your needs in an objective, unemotional way.

STEP FIVE: Brainstorm some solutions together.

STEP SIX: Try to reach an agreement together.

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EMPOWER

Empowerment: to facilitate or maintain a family's ability to define its own goals and make its own decisions

E_____ – When you are excited, so are your parents. When parents are excited, you are too.

M_____ – Motivate parents to feel a part of the care setting.

P_____ – Plan activities that include the whole family.

O_____ your ideas – Let parents know when their child enjoyed a new activity.

W_____ their ideas – Value their input and ideas. Try them.

E_____ – Recognize that parenting is hard and stressful.

R_____ – The parent's role, culture, and traditions.

Involve families in your decision-making. For instance, ask them what they would like for their child to learn in the next six months. What ideas for activities do they have? For many parents of infants and toddlers, this will be a new experience.

Remember the children in your care are part of a family. Families must feel confident that you will treat their children with the respect they deserve.

Setting Family Goals

- Goal setting
- Technical assistance to reach goals
- Relationship based practices
  - Positive goal oriented relationships
  - Positive outcomes
  - Describe the child's behavior – objectively; not feelings
  - Focus on family-child relationship

A good way to partner with families is to allow families to set goals for their child(ren) in care. This may be something new for families and perhaps a bit difficult. With your assistance, families can articulate what they would like their child to learn, experience, and accomplish while in your care.

Part 3:
Family Engagement

When we think about all of the different types of families in our programs, how do we think of them? What are our expectations? Often, we would like to blame parents and families for things they DON'T do. What about taking a different point of view and asking them to share their skills and culture?

Involvement vs. Engagement

Involvement	Engagement

Parent engagement, as defined by the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework means: "…building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike. It refers to the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and activities of families that support their children's positive development from early childhood through young adulthood."

Involvement

- Responsibility of _____

- Revolves around outputs

- Small percentage of families involved in _____ opportunities

- Programs collect data from children and families (e.g. information about parent participation)

Programs that involve parents collect data, not necessarily to improve services, but from children and families to get information for parent participation. Sometimes involvement is the beginning of building relationships that lead to family engagement.

Elements of Family Engagement

Joyce Epstein has identified 6 important elements in her model for Family Engagement. Her work comes from the ideas of Uri Bronfenbrenner, who developed his famous family systems theory, weaving together family, school (program), and community.

1._____
   Children's learning is supported by their parents and families in their home environments.

2.Communicating
   The program and families have two-way effective communication, in one-on-one conversations and other contexts such as early learning program to home, home to early learning program.

3._____
   There are opportunities for families to help and support the program.

4.Learning at Home
   When children are at home, families can continue providing them with learning experiences in many different ways (e.g., storybook reading, drawing, conversing at mealtimes) in order to bridge what they do in their early learning program with what they do at home.

5._____ Making
   Parents/families have a voice in program decisions, developing parent leaders & representatives.

6.Collaborating with _____
   Finally, community resources and services are identified and used to strengthen the program, family practices, and children's development & learning.

Source: Epstein, J. School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools, 2001
Source: Epstein, J. et al. (2009). School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action (3rd ed.)

The basic theme of this list has to do with one thing - Relationships. Family engagement is fundamentally based on family-program relationships. It relies on the families' strengths, not challenges, and is characterized by trust, shared values, ongoing two-way communication, mutual respect, and attention to each others' needs.

How Do We Get Families Engaged?

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Community Resources

Know your local resources and share them:

- Food, shelter, clothing, etc.
- Local banks, health insurance carriers, medical professionals, mental health services, etc.
- Resource library with books, videos, brochures and other resources to borrow

Consider inviting local banks, health insurance carriers, medical professionals, mental health services, etc. to come speak about their organizations and any support that are available. Families will feel important and encouraged. A higher quality of life at home will translate into better outcomes and success for children in your programs.

Maintain a resource library with books, videos, brochures, and other resources for families to borrow. Topics could include parenting, dealing with mourning, moving, etc. By listening to your families and asking questions, you should have a general understanding of what resources are most needed in your library.

Local Resource Name	Phone Number	Website

Supporting Families: Scenarios

Read the assigned scenario and think about how you can help support the family.

Scenario 1

One month ago, Felicia and her young son Titus moved from Chicago to a small town. They love the small town feel as it is quiet and less congested than the city. However, they miss the interactions they had in the city. Recently, they experienced a challenge that has impacted Felicia's ability to work. Her car is not working. She used her savings to move to the small town. Transportation is an issue. She does not live on a bus route and has no friends locally who can help. It is too expensive to take a cab to Titus's child care program and work twice a day. However, if she cannot go to work, she will not have the money to get her car fixed. It is a circle of events that has caused her stress. Finding a way to get Titus to child care while finding a way to work has been a challenge.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Scenario 2

Jonathon returns from his tour of duty in the Middle East. He lost his right leg and is having trouble adjusting to being disabled and unemployed. His wife and two sons, two and four years old, are feeling the family and financial stress. The mother works to make the bill payments but that leaves Dad home to care for the boys.

Notes:

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Scenario 3

Abigail and Rodney lost their house in a fire. While the family escaped physically unharmed from the fire, they only have the clothes they were wearing.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Scenario 4

Geneva is a single parent who lost her job. She has two small children to care for while working to pay for clothing, food, and shelter. It is the holiday season and she will not be able to afford gifts for her children.

Notes:

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_____

_____

_____

Scenario 5

Gerald recently moved his family to the United States. The only person in the extended family of 12 that speaks English is the 5th grade daughter, Blanca. The family needs permanent housing, help learning English, help getting employment, and child care that they can afford for the three youngest children.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Requires Full Engagement by ALL

- Parents/Families
- Family Service Workers
- Teachers/Home Visitors
- Bus Drivers, Cooks, Janitors
- Program Directors
- Governing Boards
- Community Partners

Social World of a Family

We know, and research demonstrates, that the partnership of the people closest to the child truly affect them and their development. But, there are other factors that impact the child and family.

Social Learning Theory discusses all the factors that influence the family. These factors influence how a family functions, responds, and interacts within the family unit and with society in general.
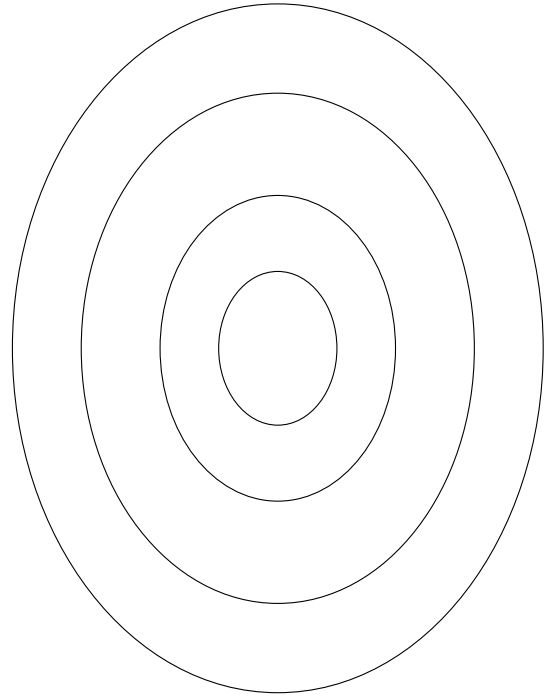
- At the center of the social world of any family are the family members. This includes everyone who lives within the home which may include extended family members. What makes up this family and their values, traditions and culture? It is important for us as child care providers to understand and respect these important influences on a family.

- Surrounding the core is the informal personal network. These are people who are in a family's life because of where they live or how they are related. These are people who influence the family and perhaps share their beliefs over coffee about child rearing and impact the decisions parents make.

- The next circle is the more formal network of individuals or organizations that impact the family. It is their job to relate to this family in a certain way. You can think of this circle of people as those who are paid to be part of the family. This circle is where some of you will fall.

- Circle 4 (the farthest circle out) is influences from society. Influences from society on family values and functioning can have a major impact on parental practices and the development of the child. There are many messages that families get from people they don't even know. These messages can come from TV, newspapers, magazines, laws, and attitudes and values portrayed in neighborhoods, billboards, and public figures such as politicians and sports heroes.

Video—Bringing Families Together: Building Community

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Knowledge to Practice

Answer the following questions.

Think about and share the ways families in your care differ in their parenting practices. What are three ways you can support each of these families and respect these differences?

1.

2.

3.

Describe two ways you involve families in your care setting.

1.

2.

Competency Checklist

Reflect on your understanding of the following competencies:

- ❏ Describe what it means that the family is the child's primary educator.
- ❏ Describe the importance of the family and its diverse cultures, structures, members and roles.
- ❏ Describe the influences on families today and how they are affected by them.
- ❏ Describe techniques for positive communication and developing relationships with families.
- ❏ Identify written policies and practices that could be used with families of children in your care (how do you have policies with family and friends?).
- ❏ Describe easy ways to involve families in the program.

Reflection: Module 5

My reflection on today's material:
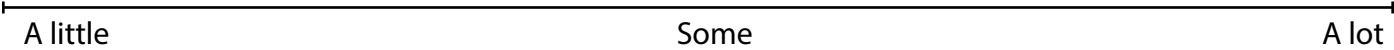
The most important thing I learned from this section is...

What I have learned or discovered connects to me personally because...

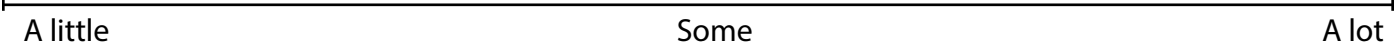The things I now plan to do differently are...

The things I now plan to start doing are...

When I started today, I knew:

A little	Some	A lot

Now that we've covered it, I know:

A little	Some	A lot

Resources

Positive Parent-Child Relationships

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE) has created a Research to Practice Series on the Family Engagement Outcomes of the Office of Head Start (OHS) Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. One in the series, this resource addresses the "Positive Parent-Child Relationships" Outcome: "Beginning with the transition to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development."

Aligned with related Head Start Performance Standards, this resource presents a selected summary of research, proven interventions, and program strategies intended to be useful for the Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) community.

The PFCE Framework is a research-based approach to program change that shows how HS/EHS programs can work together as a whole – across systems and service areas – to promote family engagement and children's learning and development.

Introduction

Positive parent-child relationships provide the foundation for children's learning. With parents' sensitive, responsive, and predictable care, young children develop the skills they need to succeed in life. Early parent-child relationships have powerful effects on children's emotional well-being (Dawson & Ashman, 2000), their basic coping and problem-solving abilities, and future capacity for relationships (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Through these interactions, children learn skills they need to engage with others and to succeed in different environments (Rogoff, 2003). They learn how to manage their emotions and behaviors and establish healthy relationships with adults and peers. They also learn how to adjust to new situations and to resolve conflicts.

When parents have warm, trusting, and reliable relationships with peers, family, community members, and service providers, they are more likely to have positive relationships with their children. To work toward the PFCE Positive Parent-Child Relationships Outcome, providers and programs can:

- provide emotional and concrete support to parents,
- respect diverse parenting styles,
- value cultural differences and home languages,
- reinforce the importance of fathers and other co-parents,
- help parents connect with other parents and community members and resources, and
- model warm, responsive relationships by engaging in these relationships with parents and other family members.
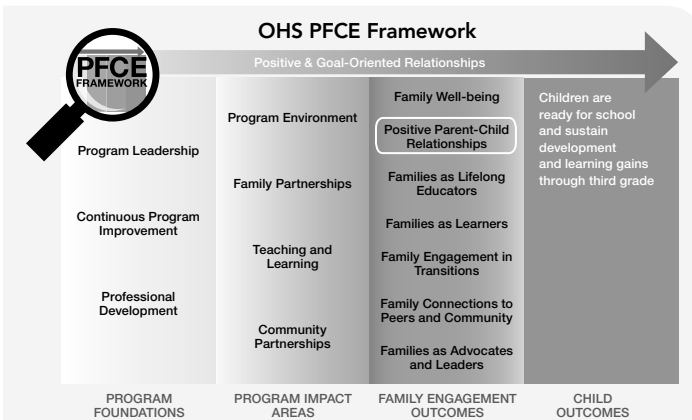
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family, and
Community Engagement

Positive Parent-Child Relationships: What We Know

Positive Parent-Child Relationships Boost Child Development and School Readiness

The day-to-day interactions between infants and young children and their parents help drive their emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Brazelton & Cramer, 1990). When parents are sensitive and responsive to children's cues, they contribute to the coordinated back and forth of communication between parent and child (Tronick, 1989). These interactions help children develop a sense of self (Tronick & Beeghly, 2011), and model various emotional expressions as well as emotional regulation skills (e.g. self-calming and self-control skills).

Families can engage in everyday learning activities, even with very young children, and help them to develop lifelong motivation, persistence, and a love of learning (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette & Hamby, 2006). For example, parents can participate with their children in early literacy activities such as pointing to and naming objects, storytelling, and reading. In EHS programs, stimulating play interactions between mothers or fathers and their children predicted children's 5th grade math and reading abilities (Cook, Roggman, & Boyce, 2011).

As school approaches, parents can promote successful transitions and persistence by engaging children in joint literacy activities such as reading together and sharing exciting conversations about educational topics (McWayne, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004).

Warm, sensitive, and responsive caregiving provides the foundation for healthy brain development and increases the odds for success in school (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Wolff & Ijzendoorn, 1997).

Building Positive Parent-Child Relationships from the Beginning

For many parents and co-parents, the transition to parenthood can be a time of excitement, stress, and uncertainty. Before their baby is born, many parents prepare themselves for their caregiving interactions by putting a lot of energy into thinking about the baby they are expecting (Brazelton & Cramer, 1990). Expectant parents begin to shift into their role as parents when they see themselves growing and developing with their unborn infant.

People who begin to view themselves as parents during pregnancy, and strengthen their bond with their co-parent during that time, show higher levels of sensitivity with their child, are more involved in everyday caregiving, and report higher relationship satisfaction (Bryan, 2000). Of course, single parents, as well as adoptive parents, foster parents, and other parents who do not have a link through genetics

or pregnancy to their children can also develop positive relationships and strong attachments with their children (Golombok et al., 2006).

Creating a safe and healthy prenatal environment is another early step to fostering a positive parent-child relationship. The research on prenatal substance exposure is complex. It is difficult to tease out the effects of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol from the effects of poverty, trauma, malnutrition, and inadequate access to healthcare that often accompany substance use during pregnancy. These challenges should be addressed with appropriate services and policies (Lester, Andreozzi, & Appiah, 2004).

Even after birth, protective supports for parent-child interactions can reduce the effects of these exposures. For example, breastfeeding is a protective factor for closer positive parent-child relationships throughout childhood (Britton, Britton, & Gronwaldt, 2006). Sensitive and responsive feeding – whether by breast or bottle – contributes to reciprocal parent-child relationships and fosters the development of secure attachments (Satter, 1990).

Attachment is the process through which caregiver and baby sensitively interact with each other from birth. They use visual gaze, facial expressions, body language, and vocalizations to build powerful, lasting ties (Bowlby, 1969). For example, when a tired baby cries, if a parent responds with quiet rocking and a lullaby, the baby reinforces the parent's response by relaxing and falling asleep. Through the attachment process, parents grow confident and deeply dedicated to their child's well-being. Babies learn their world is a safe and reliable place where they can express their needs and expect predictable responses.

Research in attachment and interaction has led to a large body of knowledge and resulted in an entire field of study, infant mental health. The work of Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) demonstrated how responsive parenting supports the emotional health and security of infants and young children. It also showed how different parenting styles contribute to different types of relationships.

Parents do not have to be perfectly attuned to their child at every moment, nor do they need to respond perfectly to each of the child's cues. Regular, sensitive responses whenever possible are enough. When parent and child misunderstand each other's signals, as they will from time to time, there will be a temporary disruption in their interaction. This gives them both a chance to learn how to handle brief moments of distress and to reach out for each other and reconnect again (Tronick, 1989; Tronick & Beeghly, 2011). When misunderstandings become the norm, however, and

the child cannot count on a parent's responsiveness, the child's development may be thrown off course.

Parent-child interactions are also affected by each child's individual qualities, and by the fit of the child's temperament with the parent's (Kagan & Snidman, 1991). For example, a very shy child may be challenging for an extroverted parent to understand. A very active child may be exhausting for any parent, especially one who is already stressed. These aspects of children's temperament and other traits influenced by genetics, along with their unique reactions to particular parenting behaviors and styles, also affect the parent-child relationship (Deater-Deckard & O'Connor, 2000).

Different Families, Different Kinds of Positive Parent-Child Relationships

Positive parent-child interactions may look quite distinct in different families. A wide range of caregiving styles, playful interactions, and emotional responses support healthy child development. Parents' responses to children's cues and behaviors differ. This may depend on their own temperament, personal history, current life situation, and their cultural goals and beliefs (Small, 1998). Their responses also may vary with their gender. Mothers and fathers influence their child's social-emotional development and future academic success in unique ways (Cook, et al., 2012).

Families of all types can raise thriving children. This includes two-parent families, single parents, and families with multiple family members involved in caregiving. It also includes parents with the same and different genders, fathers, or grandparents as primary caregivers. It is the nature and the quality of the relationships in each family that is most important for children's healthy development.

Challenges

Both directly and indirectly, poverty impacts children's development, parent-child interactions, and family functioning. Families living in poverty are more likely to have limited education, to be unemployed, dependent on public assistance, and raising their children as single parents. When families are isolated, lack resources, and live with greater stress and instability, the risk of negative child health and behavioral outcomes is higher (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Children's development can be thrown off track when parents are highly stressed, lack social support or when they see their child's temperament as difficult (Hess, Teti, & Hussey-Gardner, 2004).

Any one of these risks can pose a challenge. When risks are combined, family caregiving is threatened. This build-up of risk factors can negatively affect parent-child interactions. It can also negatively affect children's language, cognitive, and social-emotional development (Ayoub et al., 2009; Ayoub, Vallotton, & Mastergeorge, 2011). But when protective factors exist, for example, concrete support, social connections, and enhanced communication skills, and programs

such as HS/EHS that provide these, they can help balance the risks.

Promoting Positive Parent-Child Relationships from the Beginning

The Role of HS/EHS Programs

HS/EHS programs provide concrete supports that promote positive parenting outcomes by addressing families' needs. For example, programs help parents find jobs and safe housing, enroll in education programs, and connect to community agencies for additional supports. This kind of help can strengthen parents' relationships with their children by reducing stress.

HS/EHS programs also provide social supports for parents that positively influence parent-child relationships and children's social-emotional outcomes (Ramey et al., 2000). With increased social support and less stress, parents engage their children more often and are more sensitive (Ayoub et al., 2011). HS/EHS home visiting services can provide social support while promoting trust in both children and parents, and supporting positive developmental outcomes (Love et al., 2005; Peterson, Luze, Eshbaugh, Jeon, & Kantz, 2007).

Social support is one of the greatest protective factors against parental stress, depression, and low self-efficacy (sense of competence) (Simpson & Rholes, 2008). Social supports, along with a general sense of emotional security, strongly predict positive parent outcomes such as:

- feeling capable as a parent (parenting self-efficacy),
- positive ways of understanding children's temperament and development, and
- overall parenting satisfaction.

Effective parent engagement can also help parents feel less stressed, more effective, and less alone. Parents' feelings of competence can be strengthened when program staff invite parents to:

- share their knowledge about their child and family,
- spend time in the classroom to play and learn with their child,
- engage with their children during home visits, and
- share experiences from home.

Staff can also learn from families about the cultural values and norms that shape their goals for their children at different ages. These goals may mold the ways in which parents are sensitive and responsive to their infants, toddlers, and children.

By engaging parents in programs in all these ways, HS/EHS staff reinforce parents' relationships with their children. This increases program success, parental satisfaction, and improves children's developmental outcomes (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2000).

Key strategies for improving and sustaining positive parent-child relationships include:

- noticing and supporting the many ways that parents support school readiness, and

- reducing parental stress through warm parent-staff relationships, peer-to-peer support, and assistance in addressing concrete material needs.

Another way that HS/EHS programs promote Positive Parent-Child Relationships is by helping families when children show problem behaviors or are diagnosed with developmental delays. HS/EHS staff members are often the first people to discuss such developmental concerns with families. They play a vital role, providing expertise and social support, and connecting families with early intervention services (Brophy-Herb et al., 2009).

HS/EHS staff may not necessarily have the training or expertise to provide certain treatments for children with severe problem behaviors or developmental delays. Yet they can act as advocates, help families develop their own advocacy skills, and partner with parents as they work together with other professionals. Staff can also help parents to access community resources to support their children's health and development.

Interventions

The following approaches are not the only useful, evidence-based interventions in the field but represent some good examples of options for programs to consider.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is one evidence-based home visiting model designed to expand parental knowledge of child development and encourage positive parent-child relationships (Wagner, Spiker, & Linn, 2002). Parent educators deepen parents' sense of competence by observing parent-child interactions and commenting on parents' responsiveness and sensitivity to their child's behavior. Children who participated in *PAT* scored higher on standardized tests of intelligence and social development than those who didn't (Pfannenstiel, Lambson, & Yarnell, 1996). Parents liked the educators' family focus, and found them to be concerned about the entire family. Educators worked to tailor the program based on each parent's feedback (Woolfolk & Unger, 2009).

The Incredible Years is a classroom-based intervention designed to promote emotional and social competence, and to prevent, reduce, and treat emotional and behavior problems. Although teachers conduct most of this evidence-based model in the classroom, it leads to increased parent involvement (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Parent-teacher relationships actually improved the most for parents who originally were the least involved (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004).

Brazelton Touchpoints is a strengths- and relationship-based model that uses strategies such as careful observation of children's behavior and parents' strengths to improve parent-provider and parent-child relationships (Brazelton, 1994; Singer & Hornstein, 2010). Positive parent-provider relationships reduce parenting stress and isolation, and increase parents' sense of competence. This, in turn, strengthens parent-child relationships. A quasi-experimental study compared parents of children in childcare with *Touchpoints*-trained staff to parents of children in childcare without *Touchpoints*-trained staff. Parenting stress levels rose among parents who worked with non-*Touchpoints* staff while parenting stress levels did not continue to increase among parents who were working with *Touchpoints*-trained staff. Parents' perceptions of their relationships with providers were enhanced when providers were *Touchpoints*-trained, especially for parents with less education and lower income (Jacobs, Swartz, Bartlett, & Easterbrooks, 2010).

The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) focuses on increasing positive interactions between parent and child, and decreasing behavior problems and emotional disorders in children. It reduces negative parental behaviors, child maltreatment, and improves parents' mental health and sense of competence. As a result, children's behavioral and emotional problems, including hyperactivity, are lessened. These impacts have been shown to last as long as 12 months after the intervention ends (Sanders & Woolley, 2005). One major focus of *Triple P* is effective discipline. Developmentally appropriate discipline can lower parenting stress and improve social-emotional outcomes in children.

Programs can think about how the Positive Parent-Child Relationships Outcome connects to the other PFCE Framework Family Outcomes. For example, Positive Parent-Child Relationships encourage successful Family Engagement in Transitions, giving children a better chance to succeed in new learning settings.

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

When HS/EHS programs support Positive Parent-Child Relationships, children are more likely to be ready for and succeed in school. These positive child outcomes are more readily attained when interventions that promote Positive Parent-Child Relationships are system-wide, integrated, and comprehensive.

Every HS/EHS staff member who works with parents and children can help strengthen the parent-child relationship. Depending on their roles, staff members can partner with parents to understand their children's temperaments, respond sensitively to their children's behavior, clarify developmental expectations, decrease parental stress, provide social support, and reinforce parents' feelings of effectiveness. All of these help parents to engage in positive relationships with their children that prepare children for success in school and in life.

What Can Programs Do?

Use a Strengths-Based Approach to Create and Sustain Partnerships with Families. When programs and providers focus on families' strengths and view parents as partners, they can work more effectively to support positive parent and child outcomes. For example, use strengths-based mental health practices (such as focusing on emotional wellness) that make it easier for families to seek help for problems that can interfere with positive parent-child relationships. These kinds of partnerships are built over time and are based on mutual respect.

Celebrate Successes and Share Challenges. Partner with families to recognize accomplishments and progress. Talk with parents about what you see them say and do that positively impacts their children. Support parents as they respond to challenges like developmental delays and behavior problems.

Partner with Parents to Help Their Children Develop the Skills to Succeed in School. Parents can help children understand and manage their emotions, a key skill to learning in school. When children are interested in a topic, parents can follow their lead in ways that expand their interests and initiative.

Bring what Parents Learn in Parent Groups to Classrooms and Home Visits. Learning in parent education classes can be reinforced through children's projects at the HS/EHS center, home-based program or in home visiting activities. For example, the same songs and stories that portray secure and trusting parent-child relationships can be introduced in parent classes, the child's classroom, and in home visits.

Build a System-wide Approach and System-wide Services to provide social and material supports for families. Help staff members know that each of them has a role to play in supporting positive parent-child relationships. Provide professional development opportunities for staff to learn about community resources and how to help families access them.

Learn About Each Family's Cultures, Traditions, and Home Languages. By learning more about the culturally-rooted goals that parents have as they raise their children, program staff can more easily understand and reinforce the unique ways in which parents interact with their children in order to achieve these goals. Recognize families' cultural and community-based values in everyday discussions and interactions with their children in order to reinforce children's connections with their families and their cultures.

Enroll Families in Services as Early as Possible so that positive parenting relationships can grow from the start, beginning in the prenatal period whenever possible. This is a unique time when service providers can support expectant co-parents as they transition to parenthood, increase their knowledge of child development, and decrease risks for child maltreatment (Love et al., 2005).

Offer Parent Group Programs that promote parent engagement, reduce parental stress, expand knowledge of child development, and deepen overall parenting satisfaction (McIntyre & Abbeduto, 2008). Provide programs for mothers, fathers, co-parents, and other caregivers that encourage families to work together as a team. Programs may need to be offered in different packages and schedules to meet the needs of all families.

Related Head Start Performance Standards

I1304.20 (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (1-5) Child health and developmental services
1304.23 (a) (1-4) Child nutrition
1304.24 (a) (1-3) Child mental health
1304.40 (e) (3), (f) (1-4), (i) (6) Family partnerships

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Family Engagement and
School Readiness

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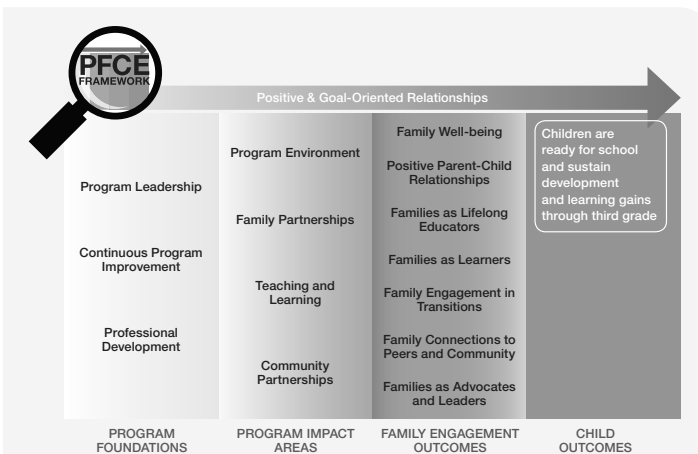

The OHS PFCE Framework is a research-based approach to program change that shows how HS/EHS programs can work together as a whole – across systems and service areas – to promote family engagement and children's learning and development.

Introduction

Family engagement: The family is the primary force in preparing children for school and life, and children benefit when all of the adults who care for them work together (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). When program staff and families are engaged as partners, they commit to working together on children's behalf. When family members take the lead and make decisions about their children's learning, they are truly engaged. Positive goal-directed relationships between families and program staff are key to engagement and children's school readiness (HHS/ACF/OHS/NCPFCE, 2011).

School readiness is the process of early learning and development, from infancy to school age, when children gain the skills and attitudes they need to succeed in school. With developmentally appropriate programming, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers make advances that prepare them for school.

Early childhood experts describe school readiness in various ways, but typically refer to five areas of readiness: health and physical development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language development and communication; and cognition and knowledge. The OHS Child Development and Early Learning Framework (CDELF) (HHS/ACF/OHS, 2012) addresses each of these domains.

Others use the term school readiness to describe a school's ability to provide children with an education (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). It also refers to families' readiness for the transition to school. School readiness is a shared responsibility among schools, programs, and families.

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across PFCE Framework Program Foundations and Impact Areas, Family Engagement Outcomes are achieved, and children are healthy and ready for school (HHS/ACF/OHS/NCPFCE, 2011).

What We Know: Family Engagement and School Readiness

Infants & Toddlers: Learning from the Beginning

"School readiness means supporting and protecting the developing brain in such a way that the brain creates a strong physical foundation for learning" (Petersen, 2012). From the beginning, parents and other caregivers nurture the capacities children will need to be ready for school.

Early interactions with caregivers build babies' brains. The qualities of babies' interactions with mothers and fathers have measurable impacts on future learning (Cook, Roggman, & Boyce, 2012; Dodici, Draper, & Peterson, 2003). These qualities include warmth, mutuality, and parent sensitivity to children's play and conversation. Interactions with these qualities lead to social and academic competence (Thompson, 2008). For example, cognitive stimulation by mothers and fathers in playful interactions during toddlerhood is related to literacy and math levels in third and fifth grade (Cook et al., 2012). Warm, responsive, and emotionally secure relationships also provide babies with healthy models for future relationships. Young children who consistently receive responsive and sensitive care are more likely to form positive relationships with adults and peers when they enter school (Center on the Developing Child, 2010).

Two major developmental achievements of infancy and toddlerhood are critical to children's later success in school:

1. self-regulation (the ability to adapt one's level of emotions to shifting situations)
2. joint attention (the ability to pay attention to what an adult or a peer is attending to).

Self-regulation emerges from children's individual strengths and vulnerabilities, beginning at birth. Each baby's unique qualities also shape the care that parents and other caregivers provide. At the same time, this individualized care contributes to each child's self-regulation abilities.

Joint attention occurs when an adult and infant or toddler play cooperatively with the same toy, read a book together, or notice an event at the same time. Abilities such as paying attention and imitating others are partly built through joint attention. Joint attention in parent-infant interactions is related to greater social skills and language learning, both essential to school success (Carpenter, Nagell, Tomasello, Butterworth, & Moore, 1998).

Self-regulation and joint attention build the base for skills that children will need for success in school and later in life. These skills include:

- following instructions,
- focusing on a task,
- controlling emotions and behaviors with peers and adults,
- adjusting to different expectations in different environments, and
- solving problems in school (Center on the Developing Child, 2011).

Infants are born with the capacity to develop these skills through their interactions with caregivers in the earliest months and years.

Of course, language and literacy in the first three years are also important to school readiness. The amount of language that infants and toddlers are exposed to at home is directly related to later vocabulary growth (Hart & Risley, 1995). In families with low incomes, infants and toddlers who were read to more often have better language and cognition at age three than those who were read to less often (Raikes et al., 2006). Partnerships between EHS staff and families that encourage parents to talk with and read to their children at home positively impact future learning. The adults who partner together on behalf of young children help them develop the skills related to later school success – early language, literacy, attention, and self-regulation (Ayoub, Vallotton, & Mastergeorge, 2011).

Preschool: Developing the Skills for Success

Family engagement in the preschool years builds on the first three years, and is linked to children's success in kindergarten and beyond (Graue, Clements, Reynolds, & Niles, 2004). One study showed that in the year before kindergarten, children whose parents participated in center-based activities were more prepared for school (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green, 2012). Another study found that HS classrooms rated high in parent involvement also had high classroom quality ratings. Children from those class-

rooms performed significantly higher on tests of receptive vocabulary and math skills (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2012). The effect of engagement is improved when it takes place both through home visits and in centers with high quality programming (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004).

Academic skills and social and emotional competence are closely related in children's development. Children who get along well with peers and teachers are more likely to participate in classroom activities, enjoy learning, and transition successfully from preschool to kindergarten (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). Social-emotional competence contributes to academic success in reading and math through sixth grade (McClelland, Acock, & Morrison, 2006). Parent engagement focused on social-emotional outcomes helps children develop interpersonal school readiness skills, and reduces anxiety and withdrawal (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). Relationships within the family remain the most critical for children's social-emotional development. Programs can make a big difference when they partner with family members to support their relationships with their children.

Fathers play an important role in children's emotional and cognitive development. Father engagement has significant effects on children's cognition and language at 24 months and 36 months and social and emotional development at 24 months, 36 months, and pre-kindergarten (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007). Children with close relationships with their fathers have higher self-esteem and are less likely to be depressed (Dubowitz et al., 2001).

As with infants and toddlers, self-regulation and executive functions (impulse control, attention, memory, and planning skills) in preschoolers play a critical role in school readiness (Blair & Razza, 2007). Parenting continues to be important to the development of these abilities (Lengua, Honorado, & Bush, 2007). Home and center-based family engagement activities can encourage families to help foster these skills in their children.

Parents' contributions to preschoolers' literacy skills are related to school readiness. By engaging children in joint literacy activities and positive discussions about educational topics, parents promote successful transitions to school (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). One home visiting study demonstrated that when mothers were engaged in literacy activities with their children and learning materials were available, pre-kindergarten vocabulary and literacy skills were higher (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011).

Programs can engage parents and other family members in learning activities and expose children to printed materials at home and in school (Buhs, Welch, Burt, & Knoche, 2011). HS/EHS programs can encourage families to read at home and in the classroom. They can also link families to libraries and other organizations that offer books and family-centered reading activities.

Elementary and Secondary Education: Building a Bridge to the Future

Active parent and community involvement are key components of high functioning elementary schools' success (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000). A review of 51 studies (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) found that children whose parents were involved with their schooling had better academic outcomes, including higher grades, enrollment in advanced programs, passing to the next grade level, improved attendance, better social skills, and higher graduation rates.

> **PFCE FRAMEWORK** **Children whose parents are engaged with their schooling have better academic outcomes.**

Across diverse economic and cultural backgrounds, family participation in elementary and secondary school is associated with greater student success. Studies of parent involvement among families with low incomes show links with school success, such as higher levels of literacy (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004). When parents engage in math activities at home, children are more likely to have higher math scores (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). One study of migrant families with young elementary school children found that family engagement led to better language skills. Families used learning materials, such as books, at home and with teachers in kindergarten (St. Clair & Jackson, 2006).

Since the establishment of the right to public education for children with special needs in the 1970s, school interactions with families of children with special needs have changed. School engagement with these families is now more often a "two-way street" in which families and educators work together to support children's learning (Turnbull, Turbiville, & Turnbull, 2000). Parents are engaged as full partners in developing and implementing individualized plans (Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) & Individual Education Program (IEP)), and in monitoring their children's progress. These partnerships have also helped advance schools' overall family engagement efforts.

Cultural and linguistic variations in family interactions with schools present both opportunities for and barriers against effective engagement (García-Coll et al., 2002). Family engagement can be highly effective when tailored to the unique interests, strengths, and needs of families from diverse cultural groups (Gonzalez-Mena, 2005). One particularly useful strategy is to bring families of a specific cultural and linguistic community together so that they have a collective voice in the schools (Durand, 2011).

Promoting School Readiness

A systemic, integrated, and comprehensive focus on family engagement can help families prepare their children to learn and thrive in school. Family well-being, positive goal-oriented parent-staff relationships, and family social and cultural capital all promote children's school readiness.

Family Well-Being

Children's physical and emotional environments affect their readiness for school. Stressful home environments can impact parents' ability to engage with programs in ways that support their children's learning. When a family's food, clothing, shelter, or social supports are inadequate, the children may not be able to focus on learning. Multiple threats to family well-being can interfere with young children's self-regulation, social skills, language and cognitive development. Stress associated with poverty can make it more difficult for parents to provide sensitive, predictable care (Ayoub et al., 2011). For more information about how positive relationships contribute to better child outcomes, see Positive Parent-Child Relationships http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/parent-child-relationships.pdf, another resource in this Research to Practice Series.

The strong two-generational programming of HS/EHS protects and promotes family well-being and children's school readiness. For example, parents in EHS were more emotionally supportive, provided more language and learning stimulation, and read more to their children than parents not in EHS (Love et al., 2005). To reduce the stresses on families that can negatively affect young children, coordination with other services, such as child welfare and housing, is essential (Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2009). Programs that engage community partners to offer comprehensive family supports have a better chance of promoting family well-being, and as a result, improving children's readiness for kindergarten.

Program and School Relationships with Parents

Positive parental attitudes toward school improve children's performance (Morrison, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2003). Yet parents' and schools' misconceptions about each others' roles can be a barrier to engagement (Ferguson, C., Ramos, M., Rudo, Z., & Wood, L., 2008). Misconceptions lead to mistrust and to less parent engagement. HS/EHS staff can help establish trusting family-program partnerships by creating a welcoming environment. It can also help to provide opportunities for families to express their views about the program and their relationships with staff. The quality of parent-staff relationships is central to family engagement (Porter et al., 2012).

Cultural and Social Capital

When HS/EHS staff form strong partnerships with families, and connect families to each other and the broader community, they build cultural and social capital. Cultural capital refers to knowledge about institutions such as schools that helps families advocate for their children. When HS staff transfer their knowledge about schools to families, families gain cultural capital. Social capital refers to the relationships that provide access to resources and power within a community (Lee & Bowen, 2006). When families connect with each other in decision-making activities such as Policy Council, they develop social capital. (See OHS Research to Practice Series: Family Connections to Peers and Communities and Families as Advocates and Leaders (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/rtp-series.html) for additional discussion).

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

In the first months and years of life, children develop school readiness primarily within their families, and in all their earliest interactions. Self-regulation, joint attention, and other executive functions, as well as vocabulary, language, and other cognitive and social and emotional skills develop both at home and at school. HS/EHS programs can strengthen families' positive impact on their children's school readiness by partnering with families to make progress on the PFCE Family Outcomes. Helping families overcome challenges such as poverty, homelessness, family and community violence, and social isolation is vital to supporting children's learning. Through partnerships with HS/EHS programs as well as other community resources, families can play an active role in their children's learning, advocate for quality education for their children, and create the collective power to improve their children's educational opportunities.

What Can Programs Do?

HS/EHS staff provide families and children with a variety of experiences and tools to support school readiness and positive learning experiences. These include:

- forming positive, goal-directed relationships with families,
- providing programs that support children's learning and development,
- offering information on healthy development, and
- connecting families with resources to address causes of stress.

HS/EHS program staff, in all roles and across all program areas, can help children get ready to succeed in school by working together on effective strategies to engage families. Here are a few examples:

Provide Regular Opportunities for HS/EHS Staff to Learn about Connections between Family Engagement and School Readiness. Ongoing professional development is essential for all staff to understand how to apply family engagement practices to improve children's school readiness. Staff may also benefit from learning about

- what families believe about connections between family engagement and school readiness, and
- how to respond to beliefs that are different from their own.

HS/EHS programs can use a variety of professional development strategies (e.g., training, staff meetings, reflective practice and supervision, mentoring) to help staff promote school readiness in their everyday work. The effectiveness of these professional development strategies depends on adequate supervision and reasonable caseloads.

Visit Boosting School Readiness through Effective Family Engagement (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce_simulation) an interactive professional tool to practice everyday strategies to develop positive, goal-oriented relationships with families.

Create Opportunities for Parents and Communities to Learn about School Readiness. School readiness is a concept that is familiar to HS/EHS staff and many parents, but not necessarily to all the adults in children's lives. For example, some adults do not know that babbling with babies or reading with children promotes literacy skills. Conversations with family and community members about healthy child development can expand their knowledge about how to promote school readiness at home, school, and in the community. HS/EHS programs can also provide easy-to-read written materials on school readiness in families' preferred languages.

For more in-depth information on how positive relationships contribute to school readiness see Positive Parent-Child Relationships (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/parent-child-relationships.pdf).

Engage with Families to Support Children's Transitions. Work on transitions with families as early as the transition to Early Head Start and Head Start, followed by the transition to kindergarten. The more practice children and families have with transitions, the more ready they will be for the next transition. When families are successful with transitions in the early years, they develop skills that will help them when their children enter kindergarten and larger school systems. Program-level strategies include professional development and learning activities for staff and parents that promote knowledge about transitions and skills such as collaboration, leadership, and advocacy. Effective community-level strategies include connecting parents with each other and developing strong program-school and other community partnerships to ensure that children's strengths and needs are addressed as they transition to kindergarten.

For more information on transitions in the early years see: Transitions Strategies: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/transition_strategies.pdf) For more information about the transition to kindergarten, see Family Engagement and Transitions: The Transition to Kindergarten (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/transitions-kindergarten.pdf).

Additional Resources

Early Head Start National Resource Center. Technical Assistance Paper #8: The Foundations for School Readiness: Fostering Developmental Competence in the Earliest Years. DHHS/ACF/HSB. 2003.

Office of Head Start National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mgmt-admin/diversity/multiculturalism/revisiting.htm

Office of Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. Best Practices in Parent and Family Engagement Video Series http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/video-series.html

Office of Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. Research to Practice Series. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/rtp-series.html

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Families as
Lifelong Educators

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement has created a Research to Practice Series on the Family Engagement Outcomes of the Office of Head Start (OHS) Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. One in the series, this resource addresses the "Families as Lifelong Educators" Outcome: "Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities."

Aligned with HS Performance Standards, this resource presents a selected summary of research, proven interventions, and program strategies intended to be useful for the Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) community.

OHS PFCE Framework

Positive & Goal-Oriented Relationships

PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS	PROGRAM IMPACT AREAS	FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES	CHILD OUTCOMES
Program Leadership	Program Environment	Family Well-being	Children are ready for school and sustain development and learning gains through third grade
Continuous Program Improvement	Family Partnerships	Positive Parent-Child Relationships	
Professional Development	Teaching and Learning	Families as Lifelong Educators	
	Community Partnerships	Families as Learners	
		Family Engagement in Transitions	
		Family Connections to Peers and Community	
		Families as Advocates and Leaders	

The OHS PFCE Framework is a research-based approach to program change that shows how HS/EHS programs can work together as a whole – across systems and service areas – to promote family engagement and children's learning and development.

Introduction

Parents and families are their children's most important educators, with many opportunities to build the foundation for a lifetime of learning. Families educate their children every day – both in formal and informal ways. Through positive interactions with their children, parents promote healthy development and prepare them for school, successful relationships, rewarding work, and better health. The skills and attitudes parents encourage will teach their children to care for themselves and for others, so they will grow into adults who can do the same.

Through learning activities with their parents, children help develop social competence, motivation, persistence, and an overall love of learning (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, & Hamby, 2006; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). These are all key components to success in school. Parents can encourage positive attitudes toward school by telling stories, reading, singing songs, and talking together about topics that children will learn about in school (McWayne et al., 2004). Parents give children opportunities for exploration and self-discovery (Rogoff, 1990) and prepare them to learn the language and math skills they will need to find good jobs later on.

While all families want to give their children the best chance at success, they may see their roles as lifelong educators in different ways. They make choices that reflect their cultures, values, and priorities. For example, some families might want their children to speak multiple languages. They may want to preserve a home language and support dual language learning at school. Partnering with families can
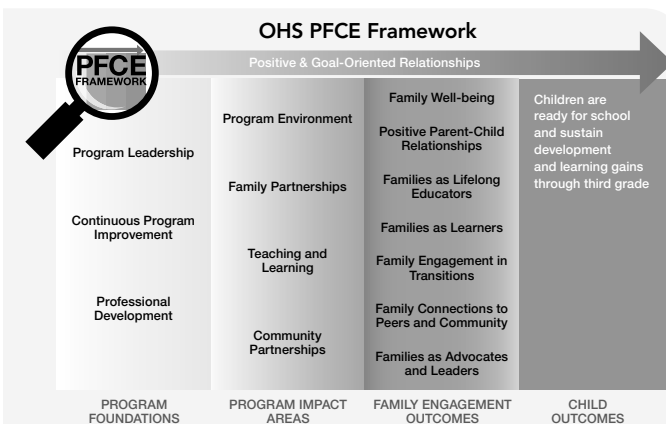
help you learn what is important to them so you can work together to help children thrive.

When HS/EHS programs partner with families, the benefits of early education will be sustained throughout children's lives. Long after these programs have ended, families engaged with their children's education will continue to provide a safe, secure, and stimulating environment, motivating children's love of learning throughout their lives.

Families as Lifelong Educators: What We Know

Early Experiences Provide the Foundation for Lifelong Learning

Parents can begin to promote children's lifelong learning as early as pregnancy. By providing a safe, nourishing, toxin-free environment, expectant parents foster healthy brain development (McEwen, 2003). Then, beginning in infancy, children learn from repeated experiences with others, especially parents and other caregivers who interact with them often.

Through these experiences, infants and children develop expectations of others, and themselves, including expectations for success or failure in learning. The quality of these parent-child interactions impacts:

- language and cognitive development,
- academic success (Bowlby, 1969; Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach, & Blair, 1997; Fearon et al., 2010),
- social and emotional competence (the ability to get along with others, and to understand and cope with emotions),
- levels of anxiety and aggression,
- feelings of self-worth, and
- how children interpret their broader social world.

In these interactions, the ability to understand and respond to their children's cues – parental sensitivity – (Thompson, 2008) influences children's emotional development (Thompson & Meyer, 2007). From birth on, children use facial

expressions, body movements and posture, coos, and cries. Later they use words to let parents know what they need – to be held and comforted, to be played with and stimulated, to sleep or to nurse. They also communicate when they feel fatigue, hunger, pain, frustration, boredom, pleasure, and affection.

Parental sensitivity is key to a parent's role as their child's first educator (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). Cues such as quiet, focused attention, or fidgeting and restlessness can tell parents when their children are ready to learn and when they are not. These cues can tell parents their children need a break or just a little encouragement in order to stay excited about learning. Program staff and parents can work together to understand and respond to children's cues effectively.

How Parents Promote a Love of Learning

Parents can help their children develop the skills and attitudes towards learning that will help them succeed in school and in life. For example, when parents read with their children, they can boost children's school success and language development beyond the impact of literacy activities in early educational settings (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). These powerful parent contributions to children's learning may be especially meaningful to parents whose own reading abilities are limited. Programs can promote parent-child literacy by encouraging parents to take advantage of no-cost early childhood services in libraries that offer shared reading and artistic activities (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Bridging Home and School with Family Partnerships

Parents who have positive relationships with their children's teachers, and spend time in their children's childcare, preschool, or school environment, advance their children's school success in many ways. Their involvement improves academic outcomes, for example, by increasing children's rates of retention in classrooms, cutting time spent in special education classrooms, and boosting graduation rates (McWayne et al., 2004). The children of involved parents are also less likely to be anxious, depressed, defiant, and aggressive (Yeboah, 2002). Children are more likely to succeed when parents advocate for their needs (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001) such as special education services, or support for both the child's home language and English language skills. Parents can advocate effectively for their children's needs when they know their rights and have access to legal and other community resources.

For example, in collaborating with schools to develop individualized educational plans (IEPs), program staff can partner with parents to ensure that the final IEP:

- incorporates parents' observations, concerns, and knowledge about their child,
- specifies the supports and interventions the child needs – in language that parents understand and agree with, and
- addresses objections parents raise during the planning process.

Parents are better able to help their child learn when they understand their child's individual temperament and how their child learns at each developmental stage. Parents and program staff can arrive at common understandings of a child's unique learning style by sharing observations and information with one another. They can learn together about how to respond to the child's temperament and share their views on appropriate expectations for that child.

Parent-teacher and parent-home visitor discussions of child assessment data can also help inspire and guide learning activities at home and at the HS/EHS program. This can increase consistency across these settings and reinforce children's learning. Teachers and home visitors can share a child's portfolio with parents, and listen to comments and insights on their child's work. This shows respect for parents' views and allows teachers and home visitors to adjust and balance their comments about the child's strengths and challenges.

Classroom efforts to improve children's outcomes can be enhanced by partnering with families. Teachers can choose classroom activities that parents can easily do at home, such as dialogic reading (specific back and forth exchanges between adult and child while reading) (Institute of Educational Sciences [IES], 2007) or rhythmic moving games that involve counting.

> Programs can encourage parents to bring learning activities such as songs and stories to the classroom that come from their own childhoods and cultures. This creates a bridge between home and school, and a parent-teacher partnership that promotes children's language and math skills.

Bridging Cultures and Languages with Family Partnerships

All parents teach their children, but what and how they teach vary with their family's cultures. Cultural differences in beliefs and values can lead children, parents, and service providers to have different expectations for children's education and development (Mallory & New, 1994) and for parents' roles in their children's education (Garcia & Jensen, 2007; Hughes et al., 2006). Program staff and families with different cultural perspectives can learn to understand each

other's perspectives and work together toward shared goals (Trumbull et al., 2001).

For children, families, and program staff there are major benefits of this kind of cross-cultural learning. For example, with open dialogue between parents and program staff about each other's cultures, parents are more likely to engage as decision-makers and advocates for their children and as partners with HS/EHS programs (Barrera, Corso, & Macpherson, 2003). In addition, parents who teach their home language to their children – in partnership with programs that support this while also promoting English language learning – enhance their children's brain development beyond that of single language learners (Conboy & Kuhl, 2011).

> **PFCE FRAMEWORK**
>
> Open communication between home and program across cultures requires strong Program Leadership and a welcoming, inclusive Program Environment. One important step is to ensure that all handouts and communications sent home are provided in the parents' preferred language (Espinosa, 2010).

Interventions for Supporting Families as Lifelong Educators

The following approaches are not the only useful, evidence-based interventions in the field but represent some good examples of options for programs to consider. Some interventions focus on one aspect of a family's life, or a specific time period, such as the prenatal period. Other interventions may address a range of topics within the context of a group or educational setting. Approaches can be comprehensive and/or multi-level. Comprehensive services are a complete set of services to address the full range of a family's challenges. Multi-level approaches address challenges within the family and in the various contexts and environments that affect them.

Prenatal Interventions

Many effective and promising prenatal interventions provide supportive relationships, connect parents to each other, and empower parents to take charge of their own health during this vulnerable period. These include doula programs (peers trained to accompany women through pregnancy and the postpartum period), prenatal massage (for example see http://www6.miami.edu/touch-research), and groups that focus on the prenatal period and preparations for parenthood. Mothers and fathers can both benefit from interventions in the prenatal period. It is a time to begin seeing themselves as parents, and to build and strengthen a social network that will support them in their new roles.

One example is *Centering Pregnancy*, an intervention that promotes self-care, child development knowledge, and connections to other parents in a group setting for expectant mothers (Rising, Kennedy, & Klima, 2004). Positive results include greater maternal knowledge of child development, more prenatal visits, reduced preterm births, and improved birth weights. All of these are associated with better child outcomes.

Parent Education Interventions

Simply providing parents with information is unlikely to change behavior. But respectfully engaging parents as equal partners, and welcoming their knowledge, pride, and concerns about their children may lead to greater openness to information - for example, how to boost children's social and emotional development, and language and math skills. Such information can also include the many evidence-informed and culturally relevant resources that teachers and parents can use as they talk, sing, read, play, and count with children (Bardige, 2009). Conversations in parent groups about all of the children's progress can also reveal new ways that parents can be most effective as their children's teachers. Starting with the positive, and listening carefully to parents' observations first, can help put parents at ease and build trust. The success of parent groups depends on positive relationships with practitioners and/or parent educators (Pinquart & Teubert, 2010).

Parent education classes and support groups can:

- guide parents toward developmentally appropriate expectations for their children, and skills and supports to increase positive parenting behaviors (Horwitz, Chamberlain, Landsverk, & Mullican, 2010),
- increase fathers' involvement, and decrease parental stress (McIntyre & Abbeduto, 2008), and
- provide opportunities to develop advocacy and leadership skills.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an example of a parent education intervention that aims to promote parental knowledge of child development, positive parent-child relationships, and parents' sense of competence in parenting (parenting self-efficacy). Children of families in this program scored higher on standardized measures of intelligence and social development than children in comparison groups (Pfannenstiel, Lambson, & Yarnell, 1996).

Parent education interventions provide social supports including positive connections to other parents. This can reduce the negative mental health impacts of living in poverty (Simpson & Rholes, 2008) that can interfere with parents' roles as teachers. Informal social support can come from other parents, a partner, and neighbors, and can help create a sense of belonging to a community. This has a strong positive influence on parents' sense of confidence, perception of child's temperament and development, as well as overall parenting satisfaction (Raikes & Thompson, 2005).

Comprehensive and Multi-Level Interventions

Comprehensive and multi-level services for families are especially important for families living in poverty. The many stressors that are linked to poverty can affect family functioning and children's development. Lack of resources (such as high quality child care or safe neighborhoods), and greater stress and instability add to the risk of negative child health and behavioral outcomes (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Social, emotional, language, and cognitive development are also at risk (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

HS/EHS programs provide a comprehensive range of services to address poverty's many challenges and build on the resilience that often accompanies it. Programs such as HS/EHS address the full range of children's and families' needs. Analyses of the long-term economic and social impact of such early, comprehensive interventions show that the costs pay off in the long run (Doyle et al., 2009). Comprehensive approaches prevent the negative effects of poverty from spilling over from one generation to the next.

Comprehensive services can help parents advance their children's language and academic achievement, as well as their social and emotional development. These include:

- medical, social, and financial stability services for parents and children, aimed at improving children's educational outcomes,
- direct enhancement of parent-child interactions in which children learn with their parents (Ayoub et al., 2009; Bradley, Chazan-Cohen, & Raikes, 2009), and
- support for parent literacy and educational goals that in turn can improve children's language development (Hoff, 2006; Pan, Rowe, Singer &, Snow, 2005).

Partnering with parents to address their full range of needs and build on strengths can also help boost sensitive and stimulating parenting behaviors (Hess, Teti, & Hussey-Gardner, 2004).

Another example that is both multi-level and comprehensive is the *Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPCs)* program. The *CPC* program promotes parents as partners in their children's education and provides high-quality educational and social support services to children and families from preschool through elementary school. This model improves children's academic achievement through not only high quality preschool programming, but also increased family involvement (Reynolds, Temple, Roberston, & Mann, 2002).

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

As children's lifelong educators, families help their children succeed in school and across the life span. Children's learning starts with strong positive parent-child relationships and is rooted in warm and sensitive interactions with their caregivers. Programs can encourage parental sensitivity to children's cues as early as infancy, and support a parent's sense of competence. This can enhance parents' ability to watch for and sustain their children's moment-to-moment readiness for learning. When their children's cues say "I'm ready to learn," parents can extend the curriculum beyond the classroom by engaging in learning activities that include warm interactions while reading, rich conversations, singing, dancing, counting, and playing.

HS/EHS programs can create opportunities for families to connect with social supports that strengthen and support their role as lifelong educators. Parents' skills and confidence can be enhanced and reinforced by supportive relationships with peers, and connections to community programs and a full range of comprehensive services. When families are empowered in the role as their children's most important teachers, they are more likely to stay engaged with programs, show leadership in schools, and advocate for their children's success – in learning and in life.

Related Head Start Performance Standards

1304.20 (f) (1-2) Child health and developmental services

1304.21 (a) (iii) (v) (2) (6), (b) (i) (c) (1) Education and early childhood development

1304.40 (d) (2-3), (e) (1, 2, 4, 5), (i) (1-5) Family partnerships

1308.21 (a) (1-7, SSI, 8-10), (b), (c) Parent participation and transition of children into Head Start and from Head Start to public school

1306. 20 (f) Program Staffing

What Can Programs Do?

Tackle Multiple Stressors with Comprehensive Services: Programs can connect parents with a full range of coordinated services that build on their strengths and protect their role as their child's most important teacher. For example, services that help parents to advance their education goals, address their health and mental health needs, stabilize their finances and housing, and connect them with peers and informal social supports all give parents a better chance to be their child's lifelong educator.

Partner with Parents to Learn What is Working and What Isn't: To use limited resources effectively, engage families in continuous learning and program change. Programs need to know what is working for children and families so that they can expand what works and modify what doesn't. For example, children's learning is affected by parents' interactions with program staff and other parents, so it is important for programs to know how these interactions are working. Programs can ask parents for feedback in surveys or focus groups about their interactions with staff and peers, and use this data to inform professional development and parent activity programming.

Engage Parents to Build Consistency between Home and School: Home-school consistency means that parents and programs work together to reinforce children's learning everywhere that children learn. Leadership and program staff can create consistency between HS/EHS programs and home by establishing respectful dialogue with parents. They can invite parents to come together to give input into the educational process (Quiroz, Greenfield, & Altchech, 1999). Home-school consistency depends on the support of Program Leadership, and corresponding changes in Professional Development, Teaching and Learning, and in the Program Environment.

Provide Opportunities for Cross-Cultural Learning and Open Communication: Families' role as lifelong educators is especially important as children learn about who they are and where they come from. Programs can celebrate families' unique cultures through classroom activities and curriculum, and community events. Staff and families can work together to support dual language learning, which promotes children's brain development and success in school. Programs can keep lines of communication open by ensuring that the Program Environment is welcoming and inclusive of families from all backgrounds.

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Families as Learners

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE) has created a Research to Practice Series on the Family Engagement Outcomes of the Office of Head Start (OHS) Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. One in the series, this resource addresses the "Families as Learners" Outcome: "Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training, and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals."

Aligned with related Head Start Performance Standards, this resource presents a summary of selected research, tools, and program strategies intended to be useful for the Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) community.

OHS PFCE Framework

The OHS PFCE Framework is a research-based approach to program change that shows how HS/EHS programs can work together as a whole – across systems and service areas – to promote family engagement and children's learning and development.

INTRODUCTION

Families are always learning. Parents or adult caregivers learn about their child, their role as parents, and ways to keep their families safe and healthy. They also learn to manage the important relationships in their lives. As learners, they are always teaching. When they share their experiences and knowledge within their families and communities, they help others gain new understanding.

Since its beginning, Head Start and Early Head Start has always recognized that families are learners. Through direct interactions with families and collaboration with community partners, HS/EHS staff encourage families to pursue their interests in learning. Some of these learning activities include participating in:

- library story hours,
- pediatric office book programs,
- WIC nutrition classes, and
- HS/EHS workshops and conferences.

Parents are learning when they:

- volunteer in classrooms,
- share the excitement and challenges of becoming a parent with home visitors,
- meet with other families (e.g. socializations),
- participate in community workshops and gatherings,
- create family plans and Family Partnership Agreements, and,
- attend or lead Parent Committees, Policy Committees, Policy Councils, and other group meetings.
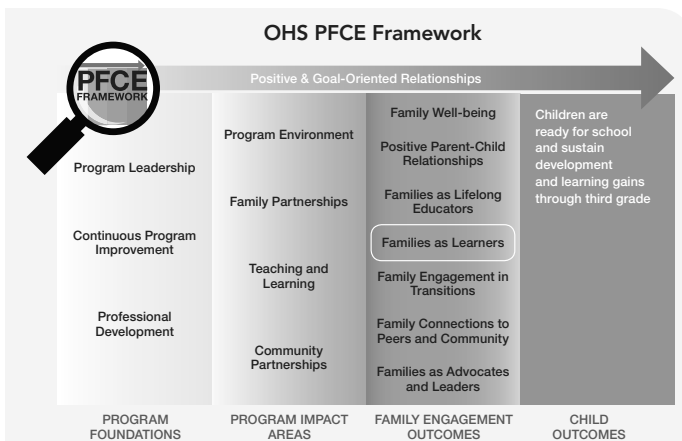
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All families have "funds of knowledge"– knowledge and information that they draw on to survive and get ahead (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). An important first step in promoting families as learners is to value what family members know already or are currently learning. Early childhood programs can learn as much from families as families can learn from programs.

Programs can embrace families' knowledge by inviting them to share their skills, language, and customs, for example, by asking them to tell a story from their culture. Staff, parents, children, and other family members can benefit from this kind of cross-cultural sharing.

Because knowledge and learning are tied to the surroundings and relationships in people's lives, each learner is different. Every learner is shaped by culture, individual experiences, and unique personal make-up. Because of the tremendous variety in family beliefs, attitudes, and goals, there is no single way to offer new learning opportunities. Responsive programs support families to build on their experiences as learners and to follow their dreams and goals.

Families as Learners: What We Know

Benefits of Learning

Formal education and job skills training can help families find and keep regular employment, and can contribute to financial stability. Staying in school is especially important for young parents trying to provide stability for their children. Teen mothers who stay in school, for example, are more likely to provide safe, nurturing, and healthy environments for their children (Sullivan et al., 2011).

Many HS/EHS parents continue their education and become staff at HS/EHS or other community programs. Over one-third of HS/EHS staff are current or former parents who are using skills, developed through their engagement in HS/EHS, to meet self-sufficiency goals for their own families (Duch & Rodriguez, 2011).

As families work to meet these goals for self-sufficiency they benefit from access to training in:

- Formal education opportunities ranging from GED preparation to graduate school
- Job training skills
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL)
- Basic literacy
- Computer literacy
- Financial literacy
- Citizenship classes

The process of learning brings many benefits that are not directly related to the information learned. Children who see their families as teachers feel pride and more motivation to learn (Araujo, 2009). Parents who feel positively about themselves as learners inspire this value in their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim & Sherraden, 2011), and help them become learners for a lifetime.

Learning can also deeply influence families' feelings about themselves, their abilities, and their future goals and actions. In the words of a former HS parent and current HS administrator:

> *"Head Start taught me so much about parenting, early childhood development, and most important, about myself and my abilities."*
> (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about/stories)

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy grows from learning experiences. It is defined as the belief that we can influence our environment and achieve our goals. Self-efficacy affects the goals people choose and the amount of effort and persistence that they use to reach them. It grows when people meet their goals, observe others achieve their goals, and receive encouragement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

> *"And it took me 12 years to get a Bachelor's degree, but you see Head Start gave me the tools to stick with it, to not give up, to know that I could be anything I wanted to be, I could do anything that I wanted to do."*
> *– Former HS Parent, Current HS Program Director*
> (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about/stories)

Self-efficacy is especially important to new parents and to those who are experiencing depression. When parents believe in their competence, they feel more confident as parents and spend more time interacting with their children (Raikes & Thompson, 2005).

Parents' self-efficacy shapes how children see their own abilities (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). From their own learning experiences, in and out of school, adult learners can help their children understand that learning requires effort. They can provide the models and encouragement that children need to develop and meet their own goals. In this way, children's feelings of self-efficacy begin to grow.

Adult Learning Reinforces Learning in Children

Parental expectations and attitudes about education are among the most important influences on children's school success (Hoover–Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents who have experienced more schooling themselves have more realistic and higher expectations for their children's school success (Davis-Kean, 2005). When children experience higher family expectations, they put more time and effort into academic activities (Kim & Sherraden, 2011).

As parents learn new skills, they tend to stimulate their children's learning. For example, when teen mothers engaged in programs to develop their own language abilities, the language scores of their young children improved (Oxford & Spieker, 2006). Families who draw on their own learning experiences often develop effective ways to teach their children, for example,

- directing children's attention to the task,
- explaining new information,
- relating new ideas to familiar experiences, and
- responding to children's questions (Schlee, Mullis, & Shriner, 2009).

Adults and children in families reinforce learning in each other. One mother describes this parallel process:

> *"I am busy. I am in Head Start. I am learning - as much as my son is learning. I am learning every day. And in that I am teaching him that you never stop learning. This is something that Mommy's going to do always and you are going to learn too. And you are going to grow and succeed in it every day."*
> (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/video/Video/NHSAParentInter.htm)

Connection to Others

Aside from helping families learn new skills, learning opportunities can bring families together. Families report that meeting each other is a valuable part of attending learning events (Webster-Stratton, 1998). Interviews with mothers in family literacy programs found that participation reduced the isolation of staying home.

One mother explained:

> *"It's very nice being here just to be around people, not just sitting home…there was a time that I was home alone with no English and I really forgot how to speak English, because I speak Polish at home to my kids."*
> (Prins, Toso, & Schafft, 2009, p. 342).

How Families Learn

Learning is enhanced by a family's social capital – the people they are connected to that help them access information and resources. A family's social capital can include personal connections such as relationships with other family members, peers, and members of the community. It can also include relationships with professionals. For example, positive family-staff relationships help families become learners of new ideas and skills. In a study of HS single mothers, the mothers reported that the relationships they formed with teachers and staff made them feel more skilled, more positive about themselves, and helped them develop personal goals for their future (Bruckman & Blanton, 2003). Such relationships provide a foundation for families and staff to learn from each other.

Learning also depends on a family's cultural capital – the specific skills, attitudes, information and knowledge needed to engage with educational and other institutions in a particular culture. Through strong relationships with families, early childhood programs like HS/EHS can help families gain the social and cultural capital necessary to be successful learners.

Adult Learning Roles

Parents and Caregivers

All families learn constantly about their children. From the time of pregnancy, they learn about themselves as parents and their own child's unique likes and dislikes, personality, communication, and so much more. Expectant and new parents in particular show a desire to learn new ways to support the development of their children.

Because families know their own children best, they can teach others about their children. Families can share knowledge about their children in conversations with program staff. They can also gain new information about how their children are developing. As they share and learn, families may feel less stress and more excitement. This can help them enjoy their caregiving role even more.

Lifelong Learners

Learning and education is most beneficial when it is relevant to people's lives and their views of the world. As lifelong learners, adults do more than gain knowledge and learn skills. They draw from their own experiences and reflect on the significance of new information. Learners are also shaped by interactions with others – learning and teaching throughout their lives.

Learning extends beyond formal education and job skills programs to build on a wide range of interests and strengths. Learning how to drive, gardening skills, and artistic expression are just a few examples of the many learning opportunities that contribute to healthy and productive lives. When programs support these types of learning experiences, families may develop lifelong interests.

Advocates for Social Change

When learners engage in dialogue to share different ideas and experiences, they define what and how they learn. They may also learn how to shape the larger community to improve their lives (Freire, 1983). For example, at Hope Street Family Center in Los Angeles, CA., families focus not only on increasing their skills as parents but also work together to stabilize the larger community. They learn leadership skills through socializations, ESL classes, parent committee meetings, and Policy Council, as well as community programs. As they learn from each other, they develop a sense of ownership within the agency that transfers to community involvement. From teaching classes on HIV prevention to leading neighborhood clean-up efforts, families can apply their learning to improving the larger community. For more information, see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IQdb-HJe7Ak

Learning Styles and Contexts

Learning happens in many forms and places. Creative programs think 'outside the box' and look for opportunities to make learning relevant, accessible, and fun.

Learning Styles

Like children, adults have different learning styles. Some will learn best by listening, some by reading or seeing, others through hands-on experiences, and some through a combination of these methods. Adults and children use a range of skills, personal qualities, and motivations to learn in different kinds of situations (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Hands-on learning, such as learning to drive or navigate a city bus system, requires different skills and motivations than other kinds of learning opportunities.

Some families may not think of themselves as learners, especially if they have had limited positive schooling experiences. They may not recognize that they have been learning while creating meaningful lives for themselves and their children. Families who are newly settled immigrants or refugees, for instance, learn a tremendous amount in order

to settle their families, but may not have received respect for this type of learning. For more information on working with refugee families see: http://teachingrefugees.com/

Learning Contexts

There are many opportunities for learning beyond formal educational settings. Programs can invite families and staff, as well as community partners to share expertise in a particular topic. For example, cooking classes can provide experience with new foods, nutrition information, and discussion about culture and mealtimes. A scrapbooking class can highlight child development, family customs, and social connection. Dance activities such as Zumba classes draw on cultural arts and teach the value of exercise. Workshops on resume writing or tax preparation can give families a chance to build skills that are important now and in the future.

One study showed that on-site learning programs at HS centers enable families to meet their self-sufficiency goals and stay engaged in their children's education without having to deal with the demands of new settings (Duch & Rodriguez, 2011). Similarly, offering adult learning opportunities during home visits gives families an avenue for growth when they don't have the option to leave home on a regular basis.

The concept of peer-to-peer teaching and learning may be uncomfortable for some HS/EHS families. In some cultures, teaching is seen as something done only by trained professionals. Families may feel more comfortable when programs use the word "sharing" to describe collaborative learning between families. Additionally, in some cultures elders or community leaders have strong influence. In these instances, programs will need to engage these leaders in discussions and help create relevant learning opportunities.

The Internet is a rapidly growing tool for learning. It offers more flexibility to families who are unable to attend a traditional class or workshop because of barriers such as scheduling conflicts or the need for transportation. Early childhood programs can promote digital learning by linking families to computers and computer training. Adults learners can often access computers and classes on technology at libraries, community centers, and local continuing education programs and institutions.

Families as Learners: Building Potential

Effective Practices

Head Start and Early Head Start programs have built in opportunities to promote learning as a priority. Home and center-based activities can focus on children and families learning together and families learning from one another. Staff and families can see their work with each other, other families, and community partners as a chance to learn and build skills that can help make progress towards shared goals.

PFCE FRAMEWORK — Strong and positive staff-family partnerships are part of the foundation for family learning. As equal partners, families and staff are all learners. When the program environment encourages sharing knowledge and skills, families, staff, and children benefit.

Home Visits

In HS/EHS home-based programs, home visitors and families learn about and from each other in the home setting. Together, for example, they can focus on parenting skills as children grow, change, and present everyday challenges.

In addition to home visits, EHS offers opportunities for families to meet together in groups. These "socializations" provide a chance for adults to learn from each other, while engaging with their infants and toddlers. For more information see: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsn-rc/docs/program-strategies-socializations-infant-toddler.pdf

Center-based programs may also use home visits to get to know families. A helpful resource for home visiting with recent immigrant families is *Lessons from the Kitchen Table*, available at: http://www.learningforward.org/docs/leading-teacher/dec07_ginsberg.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Goal Setting as a Shared Process

In effective partnerships with programs, families can develop their own goals and feel ownership of both their own learning and their children's learning. Setting long-term goals as well as short-term goals can help make learning a lifelong process.

Depending on language, culture, and individual differences, some families will need additional time to respond to staff questions while setting learning goals. Staff can routinely check with families to make sure they fully understand the discussion (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013). Professional development can help staff understand common communication patterns of families with multiple backgrounds and home languages.

Learning as a Shared Process

While programs may have good ideas about helpful educational or training activities, learning opportunities that respond to parents' interests and goals are the most effective (Brady & Coffman, 1996). For instance, staff

concern about childhood obesity may prompt them to offer a nutrition class. However, if families believe that the biggest obstacle to providing healthy food at home is not lack of information, but lack of time, they may not attend it. Instead, some may want to start an on-line chat group to share recipes and tips for quick, nutritious meals. Other families may want to meet to cook take-away meals that they can freeze. In this way, they are in charge of their own learning and interests, and building social connections at the same time.

Working with Community Partners

Programs can expand learning opportunities to meet the interests and goals of families through collaborations with community partners such as:

- community health centers,
- family centers,
- WIC,
- local schools and colleges,
- libraries,
- recreation programs,
- community-based arts organizations, and
- United Way 211 call centers.

Early childhood programs can encourage community partners to provide services to families in their home language and in culturally appropriate ways. Families and staff can keep track of their experiences with outside resources and offer these to other families in the future.

Resources

The following resources are not the only options available in the field but represent some good examples of learning opportunities for families in HS/EHS:

Programs

Abriendo Puertas is an evidence-based comprehensive training program that focuses on learning skills for families with children, 0-5 years in age. By drawing on real life experiences, it aims for positive impacts on families and children, such as family advocacy and leadership, increased parental confidence, more engagement in community activities, and school readiness. http://www.ap-od.org

Add It Up for Families, based in North Philadelphia, is a multi-generational program that helps families become financially self-sufficient. It includes math skills as a foundation for children as well as financial education and income tax preparation for adults. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/fiscal/financial-mgmt/asset-bldg/AddItUpForFam.htm

Family Wellness provides practical guidelines for healthy family interactions. This evidence-based program presents tools and supports to build on healthy patterns of relating and adds new ways of living and working together. http://www.familywellness.com/skills.php

Health Care Institute (HCI), at UCLA, has developed a training program that focuses on family strengths to promote a greater understanding of health and healthy practices for HS/EHS families. Used by many HS/EHS sites, the program includes training events, home visits, and classroom activities. http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2013/13_0015.htm

Parent Cafés support protective factors in families by offering opportunities for families to learn from each other. http://www.bestrongfamilies.net/build-protective-factors/parent-cafes/parent-cafe-model/

The Parent Empowerment Project (PEP), a project of the National Black Child Development Institute, is a comprehensive, self-discovery curriculum that empowers guardians and parents to succeed. It also reinforces their important role in the lives of their children, their family, and their community. http://www.nbcdi.org/what-we-do/parent-empowerment-project

Tools

Centro Latino for Literacy, based in Los Angeles, CA, teaches non-literate adult Spanish-speakers how to read and write in Spanish in preparation for learning English. The basic literacy course is on-line, with follow-up courses offered in person. http://www.centrolatinoliteracy.org/about

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) help families build economic assets and savings accounts. Account holders receive matching funds as they save for specific purposes, such as buying a home or college fund. Many states have IDA programs. For more information see: http://cfed.org/ about/

Money Smart is a computer-based tool that teaches basic financial literacy to adults. The 10 modules can be taught to a group, or individuals may study independently on their own. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/fiscal/financial-mgmt/literacy/fiscal_pub_30103_031407.html

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

Programs can promote family learning by joining families, honoring the knowledge they bring, and recognizing the valuable learning that each family is already engaged in. When programs partner with families to create learning opportunities that build on their strengths, meet their needs, and focus on their goals, families, children and staff benefit. Positive HS/EHS learning experiences can encourage families to pursue future opportunities for learning. Lifelong learning in families helps all family members achieve better family and child outcomes. Family stability, increased sense of self-efficacy, and a love of learning are outcomes that strengthen families and children throughout their lives.

What Can Programs Do?

Support Families as Learners

Build relationships as the foundation. Close relationships with staff can help families see HS/EHS, and education in general, as a positive experience. Personal contact is the most helpful way to make authentic and meaningful connections. Find ways to communicate regularly, such as daily greetings, quick conversations, notes, or text messages. Create a cross language phrasebook and share notes in the languages of families in the program.

Learn from families themselves. Families bring a lifetime of learning experiences with them. Take the time to listen to what they already know and how they learn. Some families will discover interests and motivation when staff listen, encourage, and reflect back what families are saying. Others will benefit when staff express their belief that families can act on their dreams. For others, connecting with learning resources may be the way to accomplish their goals. Learning from and with families is an important first step before staff and families begin the Family Partnership Agreements.

Help Staff See Themselves and Families as Lifelong Learners

Target professional development and reflective supervision that promotes family learning. Emphasize the wide range of ways families learn and see themselves as learners. Help staff see themselves as learners and recognize what they can learn from families.

Ask staff for input on learning opportunities they would like to participate in. This may involve professional development activities or other types of learning, such as an exercise or relaxation class after work.

Offer learning opportunities for families and staff together. When families and staff participate together in learning opportunities, their relationships can deepen, and they can see that they are all learners and teachers.

Develop Program Resources

Create a skills bank of family expertise. Among your program's families, you may find teachers for all types of learning experiences. Can someone teach a workshop on carpentry skills? Drumming? Cooking? Is there someone who can be a resource to new language learners or act as a translator or interpreter? The list is as endless as the experiences that families bring with them.

When families and/or staff develop goals, encourage the use of SMART objectives: Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-focused. Setting goals is an important part of developing learning opportunities that promote engagement and commitment. Make goal setting

a partnership between staff and families. Sometimes it is useful for families to hear about goals that other families with young children have made.

Create a range of opportunities that address cultural and individual learning differences. Just as each family is unique, so are their goals, strengths, and needs. Talk with parents to learn more about what they are interested in and how they would like to participate. Invite them to share traditions, home languages, and stories from their culture and background. Some parents may be comfortable coming into the classroom or taking an active leadership role in committees or Policy Council. Others may want to contribute but want a less visible role. Invite them to be buddies to new parents or record stories in their home language to be shared in the classroom.

Support distance learning. Help families tap into online resources so they can take courses and access online information. If possible, consider having a computer work station(s) at your site that families can sign up to use.

Support peer-to-peer learning. Provide a bulletin board, newsletter column, or social media site where families can share experiences, questions and answers with each other. In this way, families can see themselves as life-long teachers and learners.

Follow up on referrals. After referring families to other programs, follow up with families to see how they are doing. Make sure the programs are culturally competent and use the home languages of the families you refer.

Offer new learning experiences for everyone. Learning skills that are new to everyone in a group, for example infant massage or baby sign language for families with babies, can build fellowship, mutual support, and connections among them.

Provide logistical supports critical for families to participate in learning opportunities. These include transportation, childcare, and food.

Related Head Start Performance Standards

1304.20(e) Child health and developmental services

1304.21(a)(2)(i-iii) Education and early childhood development

1304.23(d) Child nutrition

1304.40(c)(2), (e)(1-5), f (1-5) Family partnerships

1306.22(b) Volunteers

1308.19(j) Developing IEPs

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Acknowledgements:

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

NCPFCE@childrens.harvard.edu
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching
and Learning

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and
Community Engagement

TIPS FOR FAMILIES
FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

Strong relationships help your child learn

All children need someone who cares deeply about them. But do you know how much that relationship affects a child's learning?

You and your child build a good relationship when you spend time together. A close connection helps your child to:

Manage emotions, solve problems, and get along with others.

Practice thinking and speaking.

Form a sense of self.

Develop unique strengths and interests.

Focus on learning activities at school.

Tips for busy parents

- **Move to your child's level**
- **Make eye contact**
- **Listen**
- **Speak in a friendly voice**
- **Play together**
- **Share activities**
- **Give affection**
- **Encourage effort**
- **Laugh together**
- **Empathize with feelings**
- **Support interests**
- **Give warm greetings and goodbyes**

For more information, contact us at: **NCQTL@UW.EDU** or **877-731-0764.**

Illinois Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies
Service Delivery Area (SDA)
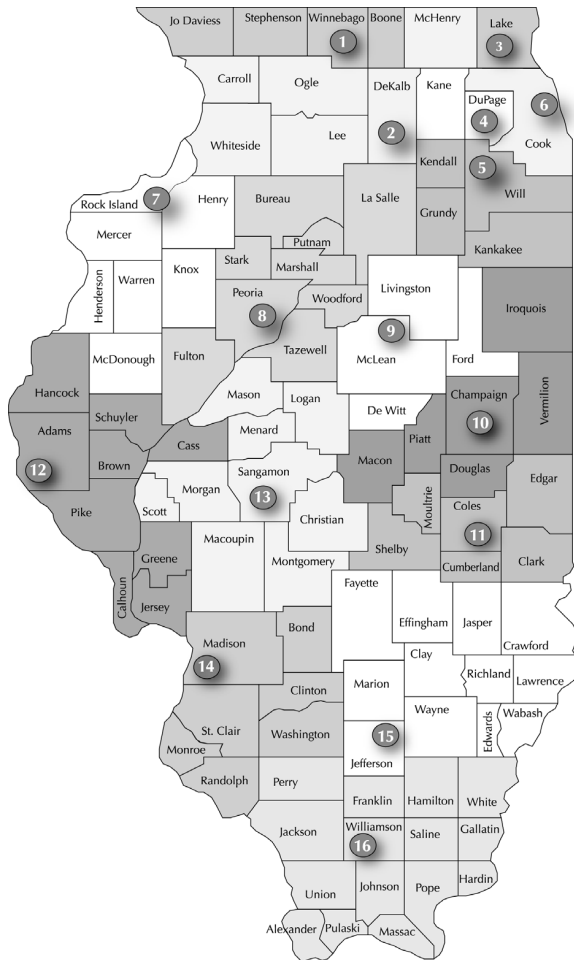
SDA 1
YWCA
Child Care Solutions
(Rockford)
888-225-7072
www.ywca.org/Rockford

SDA 2
4-C: Community Coordinated
Child Care
(DeKalb)
800-848-8727
&
(McHenry)
866-347-2277
www.four-c.org

SDA 3
YWCA Lake County CCR&R
(Gurnee)
877-675-7992
www.ywcalakecounty.org

SDA 4
YWCA CCR&R
(Addison)
630-790-6600
www.ywcachicago.org

SDA 5
Joliet CCR&R
(Joliet)
800-552-5526
www.childcarehelp.com

SDA 6
Illinois Action for Children
(Chicago)
312-823-1100
www.actforchildren.org

SDA 7
Child Care Resource & Referral
of Midwestern Illinois
(Moline)
866-370-4556
www.childcareillinois.org

SDA 8
SAL Child Care Connection
(Peoria)
800-421-4371
www.salchildcareconnection.org

SDA 9
CCR&R
(Bloomington)
800-437-8256
www.ccrrn.com

SDA 10
Child Care Resource Service
University of Illinois
(Urbana)
800-325-5516
ccrs.illinois.edu

SDA 11
CCR&R
Eastern Illinois University
(Charleston)
800-545-7439
www.eiu.edu/~ccrr/home/
index.php

SDA 12
West Central Child
Care Connection
(Quincy)
800-782-7318
www.wcccc.com

SDA 13
Community Connection Point
(Springfield)
800-676-2805
www.CCPoint.org

SDA 14
Children's Home + Aid
(Granite City)
800-467-9200
www.childrenshomeandaid.org

SDA 15
Project CHILD
(Mt. Vernon)
800-362-7257
www.rlc.edu/projectchild

SDA 16
CCR&R
John Logan College
(Carterville)
800-548-5563
www.jalc.edu/ccrr

Find your local CCR&R by identifying what county you reside in.

Services your local CCR&R provides:

- Free and low cost trainings and professional development
- Grant opportunities for quality enhancements
- Professional development funds to cover expenses related to trainings and conferences
- Mental health consultants, infant toddler specialists and quality specialists to answer your questions
- National Accreditation support
- Free referrals of child care programs to families searching for child care.
- Financial assistance for families to help pay for child care.
  And more…

Helpful Websites: Module 5

Conference Time: Talking to Your Child's Teacher or Caregiver*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/conferences.htm

Connecting with Parents: "But He Doesn't Do That at Home!"*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/connect.htm

Dealing with Parental Guilt*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/parent-guilt.htm

Engaging Parents as Partners article:
http://www.nashp.org/sites/default/files/Engaging_Parents_as_Partners_0.pdf

Engaging Parents in School-edublog:
http://engagingparentsinschool.edublogs.org/2011/12/03/a-collection-of-the-best-lists-on-parentengagement-2011

English Second Language Resources
http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/literacy/familylit.html

FAQ: What Do Parents Need to Know about the Illinois Early Learning Standards?*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/faqs/ields-parents.htm

Fun at Home with Preschoolers: Getting Ready to Read!*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/homeactivities.htm

Fun at Home with Preschoolers: Let's Measure!*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/fun-measure.htm

Fun at Home with Preschoolers: Play with Light and Shadow*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/fun-light.htm

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement:*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Art Works!*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/art.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Language and Literacy*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/languageandlit.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Learning Activity Kits*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/kits.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Math*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/mathactivities.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Music, Sound, and Movement*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/music.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Physical Activities*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/physicalactivities.htm

Things to Do while You're Waiting: Science*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/science.htm

Vroom
http://www.joinvroom.org/

When the Teacher Calls…*
http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/teachercalls.htm

(*Spanish version available on link)

General Links

Early Childhood News
www.earlychildhoodnews.com

ExceleRate Illinois homepage
www.excelerateillinois.com

Gateways i-Learning System - for online trainings
http://courses.inccrra.org

Gateways to Opportunity: Illinois Professional Development System
www.ilgateways.com

Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC)
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Care Licensing Standards
www.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/Rules_407.pdf

Illinois Early Learning Project
www.illinoisearlylearning.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
www.naeyc.org
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
www.nafcc.org

Statewide Training Calendar
www.ilgateways.com/en/statewide-online-training-calendar

Notes

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