

Engaging Families as Partners in Early Literacy

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ECHD 440 and 640
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Goals





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- Support families in fostering children's oral language, listening, writing, and reading
- Develop opportunities for engaging ALL children and their families in language and literacy activities at home, in school, and in the community
- Create a plan to enhance family engagement

EEC's Core Competency #3: Partnering with Families and Communities

1. Respect for diverse cultures and communities
2. Communication/relationships with family
3. Family involvement
4. Resources to support families
5. Improving partnerships with schools and communities



What Research Tells Us

When parents are involved, students have:

- Higher grades, test scores, graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation
- Lower rates of suspension

<http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications->



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Family Engagement

- Encourages and validates families' participation
- Consists of consistent two-way communication
- Provides opportunities to collaborate and exchange knowledge
- Places emphasis on sustaining learning
- Creates home environments that value learning
- Creates ongoing and comprehensive systems

Engage families in literacy program

- Audience members
- Classroom volunteers / translators
- Literacy teaching at home
- Literacy learners
- Contributors (planning events, making decisions, or contributing)




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FACT

In homes where literacy is supported, it is estimated that 1,000 to 1,700 hours of informal reading and writing occur before a child enters school. Children without family support have only 25 hours of such experiences.

(Adams, 1990)



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Home Literacy Environment

Academic performance in school has been linked to home activities such as:

1. Conversations
2. Reading and discussing books
3. Writing materials
4. Play activities that involve literacy activities
5. Demonstrations of the purposes of various literacy activities



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Families are experts on their child's:

- Developmental history
- Temperament
- Likes and dislikes
- Strengths
- Culture of home
- Daily routines
- Experiences with peer relationships
- Activities outside of school



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Book reading

Nine interactive book reading behaviors

1. Questioning
2. Scaffolding
3. Dialogue and response
4. Offering praise and positive reinforcement
5. Giving and extending information
6. Restating information
7. Directing discussion
8. Sharing personal reactions
9. Relating concepts to life experiences



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Early educators support language and literacy by:

- Encouraging bedtime stories
- Reading environmental print and pointing out letters/sounds
- Playing with sounds and poetry
- Allowing story book reading to be interactive
- Using descriptive and varied vocabulary
- Finding opportunities to read and write
- Listening to school-age children's oral reading



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Anne Epstein (2001)

Six elements to include when designing an ongoing comprehensive family engagement plan:

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision-making
6. Collaborating with the community



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Parenting

- Techniques for promoting learning in the home
 - Understanding development
 - Identifying and practicing proven strategies and techniques
 - Constructing home learning environments
- Increasing a parent's ability to foster development by strengthening their own learning capacity



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Communication with Families

- Parents are primary teachers of children and youth
- Respect families' cultural style of communication and participation
- Build rapport with families:
 - Regular communication
 - Mutual respect
 - Respond to questions
 - Seek support as needed



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Communicating

- Welcome families to the community
- Regular ongoing communication
- Provide program with background information on individual children
- Provide feedback to clarify potential misunderstandings



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Volunteering and decision-making

- Classroom
 - Assisting in instruction
 - Special events
 - Field trips or family events
- Leadership and decision-making
 - CORE standards and curriculum
 - Goals and objectives
 - Extending learning at home or in the community



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Learning at home

- Reading to or with children
- Time spent by parent(s) and children watching TV
- Expectation for child's future
- Reading habits of parent(s)



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Learning activities


- Utilizing the community resources: parks, stories, museums, outdoor activities, sporting activities, religious organizations
- Connections with social services
- Connections with other parents in the neighborhood



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Collaborating with the community

- Massachusetts Libraries
- Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Programs
- Massachusetts Literacy Foundation
- Massachusetts Children’s Museum Directory
- Massachusetts Home Directory of Museums



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Family engagement

Provide a diverse array of options for family choice:



- Home visits <http://www.hfrp.org/>
- Social events
- Multiple forms of communication
- Special family events
- Seek information about children from parents
- Include parent input into program oversight
- Ask parents for help
- Creative parent-educator conference




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Valuing children’s education



- Share information on how families can naturally interact and build literacy and background knowledge
- Connections among families, community and educational systems

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Resources to support families

- Work with families within a community
- Unique knowledge of family/child needs
- Link to other types of agencies who support family and child
- Link with other early education and care providers in geographic proximity
- Outreach to artists, authors, law enforcement, firefighters, etc.

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Families Engagement Matters

- Children exist within the context of families and communities
- Create history and background knowledge
- Connect to what child/youth know
- Respect richness of prior experiences
- Children will continue with families
- Family support maximizes the potential for positive outcomes






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Research shows that

Meaningful engagement of families:

- Supports school readiness and later academic success (Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006)
- Increases in children’s reading achievement, decreased rates of grade retention, fewer years in special education and improved high school completion rates (Clements, Reynolds, and Hickey, 2004)

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Action Plan for Engaging Families

- Create a plan to involve families in developing language and literacy at home, in the classroom, or the community.
- Discuss how you will incorporate parents as leaders and discuss how you will be sure to reflect the local knowledge and culture of families in the community.
- Articulate shared goals and plans.
- Describe how the event will be evaluated.



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