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## Building Positive Relationships with Families

### INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with "Principles of Effective Family Engagement," an article from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The questions and activities in this handout can be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

### Goals

- ◆ Identify exemplary family engagement practices in early childhood programs.
- ◆ Assess your current family engagement practices and identify strengths and areas for growth.
- ◆ Learn how relationships with families can help you strengthen your teacher-child relationships.

### Activity

- ◆ Before reading the article, use the prompting questions to reflect on your current practices and beliefs about building positive relationships and engaging families.
- ◆ Read the article. This article was written for NAEYC's Engaging Diverse Families Project and focused on the six principles identified as the foundation for successful family engagement.
- ◆ After reading the article, use the questions below to guide your reflection on family engagement principles.

## QUESTIONS

### Prompting questions

Complete before listening to the webinar

- ◆ List 3 practices that you or your program currently use to connect with families whose children are in your classroom.
- ◆ Think about the children in your classroom that you feel the most and the least close with. In what ways is your relationship with those children affected by your relationships with their families? Is that relationship different with children with disabilities and their families?

### Reflection questions

Complete after listening to the webinar

- ◆ This article focuses on effective strategies for connecting with families whose children are in your classroom. How do you think the way you perceive families and your relationships with them can help you connect with children?
  
- ◆ A few of the principles in the article focus on creating a partnership with families, including involving families in decision-making and inviting families to share their knowledge and skills.
  1. Identify two specific practices that you use to engage families.
  2. In what ways do you think these practices communicate to families that you see them as partners?
  3. Why do you think that it is important for families to see you as a partner? How will that benefit your direct relationships with children?
  
- ◆ Communication is important when considering family engagement. The principles in the article highlight that effective programs use a two-way communication with families, provide communication in multiple forms, and take into account each family's language preference.
  1. Think about one specific example in which you successfully applied one or more of these principles to communicate with a child's family.
  2. In what ways do you think that such principle(s) helped you to successfully communicate with that family?
  3. How will this communication benefit your relationship with children?
  
- ◆ The principles highlight the importance of seeking information about children's lives, integrating it into teaching practices, and providing learning activities to use at home to strengthen the home-school connection.
  1. Think about one child in your classroom who you would want to strengthen their home-school connection.
  2. Decide on a specific strategy (or strategies) you could use to achieve that goal and follow through this plan.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about how teacher relationships with families support children:

- ◆ **Source:** New York Times
  - ◆ **Article:** “How to Forge a Solid Parent-Teacher Relationship”
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/29/at-home/how-to-forge-a-solid-parent-teacher-relationship.html>
  - ◆ **Description:** In this article, you will read how a more cooperative teacher-parent relationship can enable a deeper teacher-child relationship. The first-person accounts from parents of children with disabilities and teachers across various grade levels will guide you in understanding how the obstacles and successes a family has faced may impact the teacher-child bond in the classroom.
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- ◆ **Source:** IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College
  - ◆ **Module:** “Family Engagement: Collaborating with Families of Students with Disabilities”
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam/>
  - ◆ **Description:** In this online module, you will explore the importance of engaging families of students with disabilities around their child’s education. After completing the module, you can reflect around how being aware of challenges faced by families of children with disabilities is important to building positive relationships with children and their parents in your classroom. Although some examples may not be directly tied to preschool, the concepts in engaging with families hold true across the child development spectrum.