Define Family Engagement

What is your program’s definition of family engagement?
Family Engagement in Early Childhood

What is Family Engagement?

*Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature*

- Early childhood education programs encourage and validate family participation in decision making related to their children's education.
- Consistent, two-way communication is facilitated through multiple forms and is responsive to the linguistic preference of the family.
- Families and early childhood education programs collaborate and exchange knowledge.
What is Family Engagement?

- Early childhood education programs and families place an emphasis on creating and sustaining learning activities at home and in the community.
- Families create a home environment that values learning and supports programs.
- Early childhood education programs create an ongoing and comprehensive system for promoting family engagement by ensuring that program leadership and teachers are dedicated, trained and receive the supports they need to fully engage families.

Technology Concerns

- Too much passive, non-interactive use
- Exposure to inappropriate content
- Commercial messages and in-app sales aimed at children
- Negative impact on social-emotional development – socially isolating, interrupts adult-child relationship
Technology Concerns

- Displaces / replaces "ECE essentials" like hands-on, creative and open-ended play, construction, small manipulatives...
- Reduces outdoor time, decreases physical activity / Increases obesity
- Increases sleep disruptions
- Adult media use, misuse, over use and “always on” tech – background TV

From the Position Statement

Technology tools offer new opportunities for educators to build relationships, maintain ongoing communication, exchange information and share online resources with parents and families. Likewise, parents and families can use technology to ask questions, seek advice, share information about their child, and feel more engaged in the program and their child's experiences there.
Technology and Your Program

What types of digital tools are accessible to children in your program?

Do you know the types of digital tools that are accessible to your families?

Engaging Families in Your Program

What is your program’s philosophy for family engagement?

• What is your staff’s perception of families and the community?

• What does family connection and communication look like?

• What is your program’s expectation of families?

• What are the families’ expectations of your program?
Engaging Families in Your Program

Consider:

• Enhance what you’re already doing
• Getting to know your families & the community
• Families’ barriers and challenges for engagement
• Tools available to families
• Multiple opportunities for engagement
• Family liaisons
• Leadership and teacher support

Steps for Engagement

• Bringing families in the program and the program to the families
• Building family presence in the program
• Engaging families at home

*Cultivating quality, meaningful, and authentic relationships are key.*
Bringing Families in the Program

Communication: convey information to families in a way they understand

- Translation and language tools (Skype, Translator, Duolingo, itranslate)
- Texts (Remind, personal, professional)
- Blogs (Weebly, Edublogs, WordPress)
- Social media (Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter)
- Newsletter

Bringing Families in the Program

Documentation: portray information that families comprehend

- Photos and digital photo frames
- Videos and audio recordings
- Website and blogs (Storybird)
- Reporting systems
- Apps
Bringing Families in the PreK Classroom

How do you use technology to strengthen the home school connection?

Show and Share

Turn and talk

• What are some approaches you’re using to communicate with families?

• Have a play with some apps and see how they can support bringing families in the program and vice versa.
Bringing Families in the Program

• Tech Playdates
• Have information available for families from events:
  – Family nights
  – Family workshops

Family Presence in Your Program

Digital Media Content
• Present cultural groups within and outside the classroom
• Allow children to present meaningful information to them
• Carefully examine content

Family representation
Engaging Families Outside the Programs

- Access to resources using digital tools (placing information online, Ela, ReadyRosie, Wonderopolis)
- Utilize community services (library, community center)
- Provide ideas for activities to extend the learning at home

Supporting Learning at Home

Pocket Literacy Coach Study
- Texts messages sent to Head Start parents
- Focus on literacy & social-emotional support to parents
- Effective way of engaging parents in the program
Building Digital Media Literacy

How would you evaluate your own digital media literacy?

Do you see the potential to build your DML along with families?

Digital Media Literacy

• Attitudes
• Knowledge
• Experience
• Competencies

That lead to fluency
Engaged Families = Empowered Program Community

With technology becoming more prevalent as a means of sharing information and communicating with one another, early childhood educators have an opportunity to build stronger relationships with parents and enhance family engagement.
TEC Curation – Trusted Sources

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