

Family Engagement Supporting Early Learning

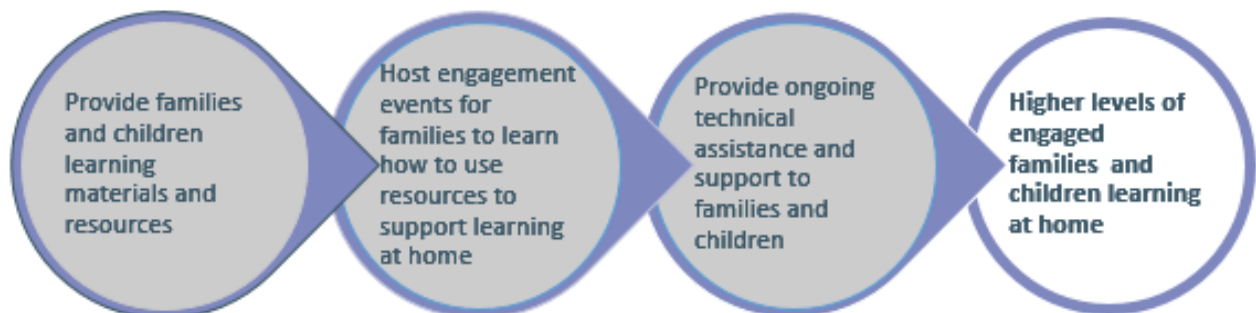
Early childhood community networks are positioned within the community to support families and children in successfully navigating the early years. Parents and families play a critical role in shaping the way children learn and view learning. Families are children's first teachers, and it is the quality of parent-child relationships and interactions that create the foundational skills that children need to be successful in school and in life.

According to recent research, providing consistent family engagement during the earliest years of a child's life acts as a catalyst for a child's potential development, particularly for children in low-income families in that it helps create consistency between the home and school environments.¹

- It is one of the most powerful predictors of a child's development.
- The positive outcomes of engaged parents are powerful: increased support for children's learning at home, empowered parents, and improved family well-being.
- Children see benefits like improved cognitive development and academic performance, better social-emotional development, and improved health.¹

Community-wide support *includes all families* and children who reside in the community, regardless of enrollment status or learning environments (e.g., birth through 5 years, enrolled, non-enrolled, public/private school based, child care center, family child care, Head Start/Early Head Start). Consider implementing programs or strategies that strengthen families, parenting practices, parent-child relationships, home learning opportunities, partnerships between families and teachers, and emphasize a child's development and well-being.

- Programs that emphasize and support a child's learning, social/emotional development, health and mental health
- Programs that promote early brain development, positive parent interactions, and parent-child relationships
- Programs that promote home learning activities and strengthen parent-teacher partnerships
- Programs that support developmental milestones, monitoring, and screening
- Programs that emphasize how to find, enroll in, and afford a quality early childhood care and education program



¹ Source: [The Importance of Family Engagement](#): Find out more about family engagement and how our research supports this key element of high-quality early education. September 25, 2019

Funding Options

Strategies should support all families and children who reside in the community, regardless of enrollment status or learning environments. As communities determine funding opportunities, a community-wide engagement approach is supported by the [Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations \(CRRSA\) Act](#) and the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#) and school-based engagement opportunities can be funded with [ESSER funds](#).

Family Engagement Strategies	
Engagement Strategy	Purpose
Family or Parenting Workshops	Offer parenting workshops and positive parent-child interactions and educational-focused workshops
Communication	Consistent and ongoing two-way communication (e.g., emails, newsletters, shared-journals, parent-teacher conferences)
Resource Fairs	Host a fair for families and children that connects families to social service and government assistance programs (e.g, early learning transition event, family fun event, developmental screening clinic)
Learning at Home	Provide educational-focused workshops for families to help adults at home learn how to support their child’s learning and development at home
Family Leadership & Advocacy	Invite families to participate in decision-making opportunities (e.g., ECE boards, local advocacy, and family support groups)
Community Learning and Collaboration	Promote information on special events at local museums, libraries, and parks; co-create community service projects; and invite community leaders to speak in the classroom and at parent events (e.g., fireman, police, doctors, dentists, home-visiting nurses)

J. Epstein, et. al., School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, on the internet as a PDF at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/ERIC-ED467082/pdf/ERIC-ED467082.pdf.

Supporting Early Learning at Home

To ensure successful implementation of early learning supports, families will need explicit modeling of learning activities to provide to their children at home. Community networks should plan to pair family engagement resources with engagement opportunities to model for families how to use the learning program, materials and resources (see section below- Family Workshop or Forums for examples of teaching families about resources).

Child-learning supports

- Learning activities for children to use at home and throughout the community (library, museums, parks, neighborhood, church, shopping, etc.)
- Resources available for all children (paper or digital)
- Books to build home libraries and to encourage early literacy activities at home

Distribution methods

- Distribution of paper materials, resources, and books (e.g., families pick up/drop off materials at designated locations)
- Online Books and resources can be offered through classroom webpages and/or social media (e.g., mass emails or text alerts to provide digital materials, Facebook, Google Classroom, Bright by Text, etc.)
- Materials (in their home language), activities, and ideas to help prepare a child for Kindergarten

Supporting Tier 1 Curriculum

[Frog Street Pre-K Summer Program - Kid's Club](#) - This four-week thematic unit includes pretending, painting, packing for a special trip, making and playing games, blowing bubbles, and asking lots of “why?” questions. Kid's Club focuses on key **literacy** and **math** skills needed for beginning Kindergarten; integrates science, social studies, and physical development; and includes Conscious Discipline® strategies for social-emotional development.

[Frog Street Pre-K at Home](#) - Frog Street Pre-K at Home is an online, hands-on program that provides daily, intentional lessons so that family members can be their child's best teacher. The program is aligned to the classroom version of Frog Street Pre-K and uses easy-to-find household items and online resources, including books and music, to guide learning experiences.

[The Creative Curriculum's Digital Children's Library \(Teaching Strategies\)](#) - The Digital Children's Library is available with a subscription to *The Creative Curriculum® Cloud* and consists of titles that are equitable and expose children to a wide range of genres. The books, available in English and Spanish, explore life in other cultures, celebrate diversity, spark curiosity, and inspire children's imaginations. Families will have direct access to all of the digital books in the Teaching Strategies family mobile app.

[The Creative Curriculum's The Family Learning Pack \(Teaching Strategies\)](#) - The Family Learning Pack is an accessible, engaging, whole-child summer learning adventure that puts meaningful materials in the hands of schools and programs, which they can in turn distribute to families when they need it the most. Providing authentic books and home learning manipulatives, combined with family- and child-facing digital tools and eBooks, these Family Learning Packs demonstrate that meaningful learning is all about connections—connecting the family and child, and connecting families and schools or teachers.

Supporting Early Literacy

Strategies for supporting early literacy

- Distribution of paper materials, resources, and books (e.g., families pick up/drop off materials at designated locations)
- Online Books and resources can be offered through classroom webpages and/or social media (e.g., mass emails or text alerts to provide digital materials, Facebook, Google Classroom, Bright by Text, etc.)
- Materials (in their home language), activities, and ideas to help prepare a child for Kindergarten

Listed below are vendors with family literacy programs:

[Raising a Reader](#)- As a non-profit organization that focuses on literacy and reading activities for children and families. Children drive the book lending process and are exposed to over 100 books within a year to bring home their Red Book Bag to their family to read. Program Implementers learn how to train parents in “read aloud” strategies and early brain development. The book bag delivery system is turnkey: a simple sustainable routine that is easily managed in a number of diverse settings. Parents learn and engage in “read aloud” strategies and develop a regular book sharing routine with their children.

Supporting Family Workshops or Forums

Creating opportunities for families and practitioners to connect in family workshops or forums is a highly impactful way to build reciprocal, trusting relationships. During these workshops/forums, families also learn about other community resources and make peer/social connections which strengthen the bonds to the local community.

Strategies for engagement in Parent Group Settings

- **Lunch and Learn sessions**, scheduled conveniently for families, provides an engagement opportunity to share information and resources with families
- **Parent-teacher Coffee Calls**, virtual/in-person and scheduled conveniently for families, provides an engagement opportunity to share information and resources with families

Listed below are vendors with family workshop/forum programs

[Frog Street The Six Building Blocks of](#) In this 3 hour session, teachers of infants through Pre-K 4 are provided with the opportunity to explore the foundation for family engagement that emphasizes the process of working with your school family.

Participants will

- understand the impact of family engagement
- discover the Six Building Blocks of Engagement
- explore the Partners in Education: Dual Capacity Framework Version 2
- discuss the impact of collaborative communication
- engage in social and emotional support for families

[LENA Start](#) LENA Start is a turn-key early-language program designed for scalable, effective outreach to parents of children aged birth to three. It employs LENA technology, targeted early language curriculum, and a cost-effective group delivery model to improve interactive talk and generate measurable results.

[LPB Family and Community Learning Workshop](#) PBS KIDS Family & Community Learning (FCL) is a series of workshops that engage families in active, hands-on activities and a facilitator’s guide. Workshops are 90-120 minutes and provide time for meaningful engagement without being too time-consuming for busy families.

[Louisiana Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Initiative](#) The ACEs Initiative is a child-focused initiative dedicated to creating a common understanding of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) within Louisiana communities and educating the child- and family-serving workforce. To schedule a presentation, contact acepresentation@la.gov.

[Tulane Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#) Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) is an intervention that teams a mental health professional with early childhood professionals to improve the social, emotional and behavioral health of young children in early learning settings. The program provides services to practitioners and families. Request personal consultation services, contact us at: 504-264-1287 or TIKES@tulane.edu

[Training Grounds](#) TrainingGrounds Inc is a non-profit organization that helps families and professionals with creating rich learning experiences for children and positive adult-child interactions. Offer workshops and seminars to parents and caregivers with children between the ages of birth -5 years. These workshops and seminars are delivered in neighborhoods and communities where parents live and work and utilize a strength based approach in which everyone can participate.

Supporting Family Communication

Establish two-way communication between families and educators that is applicable for all families with children enrolled or not non enrolled (e.g., weekly virtual parent-teacher coffee calls, family email inbox, family phone number or hotline, etc.)

Strategies for communication

- **Calendar of Family Engagement** events published annually and months in advance for families, educators, and communities partners to plan
- **Family or Engagement Coordinator** determine a point of contact for families with questions about learning, development, and community resources
- **Family Email Inbox**, provides families with a direct source for question and answers

Listed below are vendors with family communication programs:

[Ready Rosie \(Teaching Strategies\)](#) Ready Rosie is an early education tool that helps families, schools, and communities deepen and scale their family engagement efforts by leveraging video modeling, family workshops, professional development opportunities, and mobile technology.

[FASTalk \(Family Engagement Lab\)](#) FASTalk is a text-based tool for teachers that sends grade-level academic, social, and emotional learning tips by text message in the family's home language.

[Bright by Text](#) A digital platform designed to support community engagement initiatives by connecting families and educators. The communication app shares information about local events and opportunities for families and young children, and can provide information about use back to the community. Using this platform will provide engagement opportunities with hard-to-reach parents and caregivers in your community. Networks can customize messages to build an audience and drive engagement.

- If a community network is interested in becoming a partner, the app is free through Louisiana Public Broadcasting. Text BRIGHT to274-448