

Family Engagement Supporting Early Learning

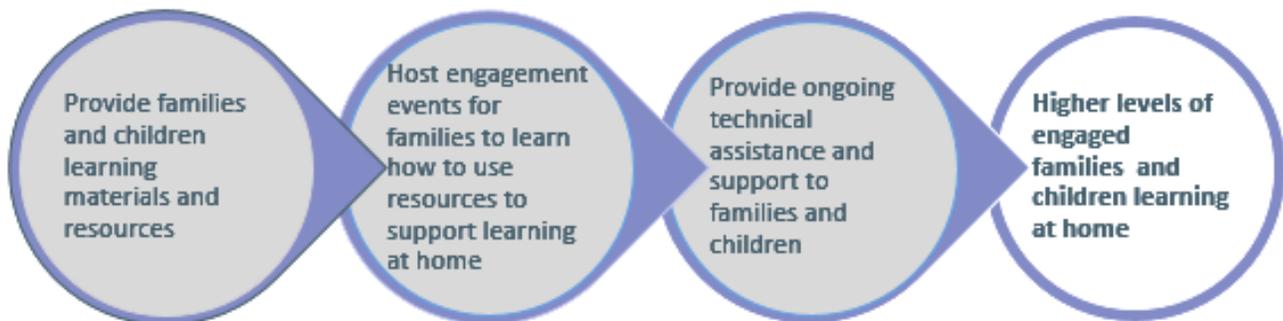
Early childhood community networks are positioned within the community to support families and children in successfully navigating the early years. Parents and families play a critical role in shaping the way children learn and view learning. Families are children’s first teachers, and it is the quality 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., firemen, 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

Effective family engagement both enables school readiness and creates opportunities for families to reinforce and extend learning at home. It also works to establish a mutually supportive network of educators, families, and children, creating a climate that promotes learning and success.

Families should experience explicit modeling of how to use strategies, resources, and activities in order to duplicate these activities at home with their children. Community networks should plan to pair at-home learning strategies, resources, and activities with a type of family workshop or other engagement opportunities that provides explicit modeling for families.

Example strategies to support early learning at home

- Provide ongoing, consistent family workshops (monthly or bi-weekly) on various topics and including explicit modeling for families on educational materials, resources, classroom strategies, and educational technology/platforms

Supporting Families with Tier 1 Curriculum

Communities networks can explore their current Tier I curriculum to learn about the family engagement materials and resources offered. Many times there are supplemental materials provided by the curriculum and other curriculum vendors require additional purchases for family engagement materials. Many curricula provide targeted programs that support family engagement and professional development at additional costs.

Listed below are curriculum vendors who provide family engagement support:

[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

Families are their child’s first teachers and serve as valuable partners throughout a child’s literacy development. Family literacy is strengthening home literacy activities that provide literacy skill-building opportunities for young children while enhancing literacy skill development in all members of the family. Providing families with quick, easy-to-use activities and strategies to use at home strengthens school-home connections and deepens learning. Communities can use the [Supporting Early Learning and Literacy PD Guide](#) and [Family Literacy Engagement Strategic Plan](#) to assist with planning.

Example strategies for supporting early literacy

- Provide literacy skill strategies, book bags, resources, and books
- Share online books, online library subscriptions, and resources
- Provide books that are culturally responsive for all children and families (families of all races and ethnic backgrounds, military families, single-mother/single-father families, grandparent caring for grandchildren, foster families, seasonal-migrant farmer families, dual language learner families, English language learners)
- Modeling literacy activities for family and child to complete together
- Materials (in their home language), activities, and ideas to help prepare a child for Kindergarten

Listed below are vendors who support family literacy:

[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 bookbag 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.

[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.

Family Workshops or Forums

Family education workshops provide a space where families and teachers can collaborate to support the child’s learning and inspire parents to embrace the learning that starts in the classroom and continue it at home. These workshops allow for a team-based approach as teachers and families work together to implement best practices. Creating opportunities for families and teachers to connect at family workshops or forums is a highly impactful way to build reciprocal, trusting relationships. During these workshops/forums, families can also learn about other community resources and make peer/social connections which strengthen the bonds to the local community.

Examples strategies for family workshops

- Lunch and Learn sessions (same time, weekly/monthly) scheduled conveniently for families, provide an engagement opportunity to share information, create a shared vision and common understanding of their child's learning
- Parent-teacher Coffee Calls, (same time, weekly/monthly) virtual/in-person and scheduled conveniently for families, provide an engagement opportunity to share information and resources with families

Listed below are vendors with family workshop programs

[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.

[Frog Street The Six Building Blocks of Family Engagement](#) 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 Louisiana's [Be Engaged Birth-12 Framework](#)
- 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 with families and children without being too time-consuming for busy families.

[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.

[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

Family Communication

The better the communication, the higher the engagement. This is true for children in the classroom and for families at home. Networks and teachers can establish a standard of constructive, individualized, and on-going dialogue with the families about their child's learning. Establish two-way communication between families and educators that is applicable

for all families (e.g., in-person communication, personal phone calls, emails, and text messages, committee meetings, etc.).

Examples strategies for communication

- Family workshops that provide opportunities to connect and communicate with educators that are held at consistent times establish relationship or partnership expectations that families can trust, e.g., Webinar Wednesdays, Parent Cafes, Family Fridays.
- Provide an annual calendar of family events published months in advance (on the website and in the community) for families, educators, and community partners to plan. Promote monthly events on social media and with community partners.
- Determine a point of contact for families with questions or concerns (person, email inbox, etc.)
- Family email inbox provides families with a direct source for question and answers

Listed below are vendors with family communication programs:

[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 users 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 to 274-448

[Remind app](#) Two-way, text-based communication for updates, instruction, and more—at every level in your organization.

Practitioners with Professional Development

Providing professional development can assist in building program capacity and ensuring teachers are prepared and confident when engaging families. Programs and teachers should attend training that develops skills to build effective partnerships with families through professional development about:

- Community resources to share information/services with families.
- Parenting styles, parent-child interactions, the role of temperament and family cultures
- Communication styles and relationship-building with parents (strength-base approaches)
- Caregiving practices for all families and families of children with an identified disability or developmental delay
- Mental health and wellness and the effect of excess stress and adverse experiences on parent-child relationships (ACEs training)
- Strategies for supporting fathers and grandparents raising children and others who are part of nontraditional family structures
- The importance of home languages to promote the development of a positive cultural and individual identity for all children and their families

Listed below are vendors with professional development on family engagement:

[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.

[Flamboyant Foundation](#) (PD) Our teacher and leader training is led by a cadre of teacher and parent trainers. Educators learn about effective family engagement practices while exploring their assumptions about students and families to deepen their understanding of how systems of inequity impact their students. [Teacher and leader training](#)

[National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement](#) (NCPFCE) provides training and professional development activities that reflect current evidence. The Office of Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework is a guide to learning how family engagement promotes positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities. There are a variety of professional development videos, training, and articles found at [Family Engagement Resources](#).

[Parent-Teacher Home Visits](#) The organization provides an interactive session centers on building the capacity of educators to effectively build meaningful relationships with the families of their students, starting with a voluntary home visit. Learn our distinct 5 non-negotiable core practices and how and why they lead to success.

[WestED](#) Our professional development and technical assistance services prepare educators and providers to transform the way families participate in advancing their child's learning. Participating educators explore up-to-date research on family engagement and apply evidence-based practices in the classroom with families. Also, participants will gain the confidence and skills to cultivate genuine relationships with families and engage them as true partners in their child's academic and personal success. [Academic Parent-Teacher Teams](#)

Early Childhood Transitions

Transition is recognized as a process, rather than a single event that happens to a child. Communities and school systems should provide a series of intentional experiences for the child to adjust to the new expectations of pre-K or kindergarten.

Consistent, ongoing opportunities are essential in supporting the developmental needs of children as they transition. Individuals who play an important role in early childhood transitions are families, schools and early learning centers, early childhood practitioners, and community stakeholders. Communities can use [Guidance for Early Childhood Transitions](#) and [LDOE Early Childhood Transition Process](#) when planning.

Listed below are vendors early childhood transition programs:

[Raising a Reader](#)- As a non-profit organization that focuses on literacy and reading activities for children and families. The bookbag 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.

[Training Grounds](#) Provides transition programs for early childhood. [We Play Gets Ready for School](#) offers programming each Spring and Summer to help rising PK and K students get ready for school. Uses play to foster children's development of school readiness and executive functioning; Helps caregivers understand the important role they play in their child's development and school success. Strengthens family bonds, thus boosting parents confidence in being their child's first teacher; and Uses take-home lessons and virtual activities to support school readiness skills.

[Ready Freddy](#) The Ready Freddy Program is a unique model that brings together all the necessary elements and participants for a quality early childhood transition. The resources are built on research and trial-and-error transition efforts that include a focus on Kindergarten enrollment and attendance. Provided are a [series of toolkits](#) for the facilitator, team members, families and more.