

## Draft of High-Quality Prekindergarten Family Engagement Strategies

### Definitions of Family and Family Engagement

Proposed definition of *family*:

Family includes adults and children significant in the child's life who support the early learning and development of the child.

Proposed definition of *family engagement*:

Family engagement is the mutual responsibility of families, schools, and communities; which builds relationships to support student learning and achievement and to support family well-being, family-student relationships and on-going learning and development of children, families, and educators. Family engagement is fully integrated in the child's educational experience and supports the whole child. It is culturally and linguistically responsive and is continuous through a child's life.

### Components and Strategies of a Family Engagement Plan

#### **1. Creates a foundation for collaboration of mutual partners.**

- a) Ensure the plan is applicable in different environments
- b) Foster a collaborative exchange of information
- c) Encourage family participation in decision-making
- d) Support the development of families as leaders and child advocates
- e) Establish partnerships with faith-based community and other organizations
- f) Identify the shared goals of engagement
- g) Develop or support an advisory council group as parent champions
- h) Coordinate efforts across communities
- i) Provide ongoing services/support

#### **2. Embraces the individuality and uniqueness of families**

- a) Incorporate voices of all families across race, cultural background, and socio-economic status (SES)
- b) Design a variety of home-educational resources supporting learning at home while strengthening the family/school partnership
- c) Develop family support principles to build relationships and acknowledge and respect family
- d) Use a variety of means to welcome and communicate
- e) Create cross-cultural networks
- f) Facilitate/refer to parental support/educational groups based on family interests/needs
- g) Help identify practices appropriate to age/stage of children
- h) Make goal-oriented home visits to identify strengths, interests, and needs
- i) Provide on-going professional development opportunities for educators on culturally sensitive, evidence-based strategies
- j) Invite family feedback on activities
- k) Design experiences for families that provide a variety of activities and observations

- l) Identify support from mental/physical health and other agencies
- m) Develop leadership skills for family members to include advocacy for their children/family
- n) Provide resources reflective of home language and translators

### **3. Promotes a culture of learning that is child-centered and family driven**

#### *Culture*

- a) Promote the value of education as a pathway to success
- b) Create a safe and respectful environment where parents can learn from each other as individuals and in groups and ask for information that they find helpful
- c) Create an environment that nurtures an assets-based rather than deficit approach
- d) Use positive parent practices such as attachment and nurturing that complement the stages of their children's development
- e) Provide a welcoming environment that reflects on parent experiences, practices, and new strategies
- f) Support parent-child relationships in a way that values the culture and language of families and recognizes how different cultures may influence family development
- g) Develop staff skills to support families to meet their learning goals

#### *Child-centered*

- h) Foster a learning environment that supports social-emotional learning
- i) Talk together with families about children's signals to help family's interpretation and response to children's behavior
- j) Work together to help children overcome behavioral challenges
- k) Provide complementary learning activities for families to engage in at home with children
- l) Share home learning activities with families through newsletters, at parent-teacher conferences, and at other school- or center-related events
- m) Equip families with resources and skills to support their children through the transition to school. Offer opportunities for early-grade families and children to visit the school in advance of the school year to ease the anxiety of transition to a new place
- n) Provide training to help families transition to school and provide opportunities to visit school
- o) Partner with local community-based organizations to create a family-friendly transition plan for students arriving from early childhood settings

#### *Family-driven*

- p) Provide families with training in parent leadership, support, and advocacy
- q) Provide parents with developmental expectations
- r) Provide information or training on creating a home learning environment connected to formal learning opportunities
- s) Encourage staff to respond to family members in a timely, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner

- t) Encourage parents and families to use positive parent practices such as attachment and nurturing relationships that complement the stages of their children's development
- u) Encourage parents and families to reflect on parent experiences and practices in helping children
- v) Invite past program parents and community volunteers to share their education and career experiences with current families

#### **4. Establishes and articulates expectations**

- a) Create systems and supports to eliminate barriers to parent participation that address quality, equity, and accessibility
- b) Develop systems to monitor (data collection) who is engaged in the program towards inclusion of all stakeholders. Focus on engagement of families from different/specific populations to narrow the achievement gap
- c) Focus on using student data to promote continuous family engagement
- d) Consider settings in the children's community that support children in interest-driven learning
- e) Work together with families to imagine new learning opportunities for their community
- f) Leverage community resources, build strategic partnerships, and evaluate policy and practices to create learning pathways and stimulate innovation
- g) Develop, in collaboration with families, clearly defined goals, outcomes, timelines, and strategies for assessing progress
- h) Articulate short-and long-term program goals to all stakeholders
- i) Help parents and families understand the types of involvement that will help achieve the goals and objectives identified to meet the needs of the child and family
- j) Encourage parents to participate in shaping program activities and cultivate the expectation that information can flow in both directions
- k) Provide each family with the opportunity to review and provide input on program practices, policies, communications, and events in order to ensure the program is responsive to the family's needs
- l) Provide supports and opportunities for parents to establish leadership skills and advocate for their children
- m) Ensure that parent training is culturally responsive, sensitive to diversity, and addresses varying needs of families
- n) Establish routines that allow parents to serve as problem solvers and be involved in addressing issues that arise

#### **5. Evaluates and improves family engagement efforts**

- a) Provide essential professional development for educators in understanding communication and engagement with families

- b) Ensure opportunities for continuous events for parents by parents such as training on parent leadership and multicultural principles
- c) Ensure that the evaluation plan is an initial component that guides action, not an “add on”
- d) Instill the belief in educators/staff that family engagement is a core strategy to improve teaching and learning
- e) Ensure alignment between family engagement activities and district/school teaching and learning goals
- f) Use a cyclic process to ensure evaluation results are used for continuous improvement and adjustment

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