THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK:
MARYLAND'S VISION FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

GETTING STARTED

Effective family engagement does not happen in isolation or without considering the specific strengths and needs of the family. Programs using family engagement strategies in an effective manner to support all areas of the child's and the family's life will ultimately promote children's success in school and throughout life.

This self-assessment, modeled after Head Start's Markers of Progress[1], is a working document to help you examine your program's current practices related to family engagement. The guide can be used as part of your program's current Self-Assessment Process to help you focus on family engagement. It can also contribute toward your program's continuous learning and program improvement. As you go through the assessment process, use it to affirm what you are already doing well and to enrich and improve areas of your program that need more focus. Use the data you gather through this process in the decision-making for your entire program.

> Remember you are not alone in this endeavor. Your community can be an important source of social networks and service agencies. Invite community administrators to join with you to identify new opportunities for families, the community, and your program as you strengthen your relationships with them. As program administration, staff, families, and community partners come together to enhance family engagement, children and families will benefit, and your work will become even more effective and satisfying.

The guide offers concrete strategies to follow as you go beyond involving parents, families, and community partners to engaging with them as an intentional strategy to promote the long term wellbeing of children and their families. As you get started, we suggest you review the Key Definitions and Principles to provide the foundation for your work in a shared understanding of family engagement.

3 STEPS TO ASSESS AND ENHANCE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

1. **Build a Self-Assessment Team**

Include partners representing diverse roles, cultures, and abilities – from within the program and community - and encourage all staff and partners to contribute their perspectives, information and insights to the self-assessment process.

2. **Use the Assessment Tool**

Gather and analyze information to assess your program's current family engagement practices.

3. **Create an Action Plan**

Use the data you collect to set priorities, determine goals, and develop a strategic set of actions to improve your program's family engagement practices.

OVERVIEW OF THE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

This tool is divided into six areas – each a key strategy for bringing the Maryland's Family Engagement Framework to your program.

PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS: THESE COMPONENTS INFLUENCE EVERY AREA OF THE PROGRAM

Program Leadership: The provider, director, governing boards, policy councils, parent committees and management teams determine the ways that programs engage parents, families, and the community.

Professional Development: Family Engagement training is important for all staff. Professional development focuses on how each staff member can contribute to program-wide family engagement efforts and how these roles fit together.

PROGRAM IMPACT AREAS: THESE ELEMENTS MUST BE INCLUDED AS PART OF SUCCESSFUL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Program Environment: Families feel welcomed, valued, and respected by program staff and experience themselves as essential partners in understanding and meeting the needs of children.

Teaching and Learning: Families are engaged as equal partners in their children's learning and development.

Family Partnerships: Families work with staff to identify and achieve their goals and aspirations. To make a positive impact in the area of family partnerships, staff and families build ongoing, respectful and goal-oriented relationships.

Community Partnerships: Communities support families' interests and needs and foster parent and family engagement in children's learning. Programs and families can also strengthen communities.

For each of the six sections of the Self-Assessment, you will also find:

- Indicators for Program Foundation Components and Impact Area Elements
- Assessment Grid to focus your self-assessment on a specific area of your program's family engagement practices
- Markers describing outcomes programs are achieving, or goals they are setting for themselves for successful family engagement

Markers are broken into three levels:

Starting Point:

- Standard best practices that define features of a quality program in concrete terms. These practices encourage family engagement in all aspects of the program. You will also find practices that reflect a commitment to build partnerships within the community to ensure children and families receive individualized services.

Progressing:

- These practices go a step beyond to reflect a deepened focus on goal-oriented relationships between programs, parents and families. They describe how staff build on the trusting partnerships they have established with parents and other family members. They work together to promote the ongoing learning, development, and well-being of children and families alike.

Innovating:

- At this level, effective parent, family, and community engagement practices are part of every aspect of the program. Practices in this column build collaborative relationships among the program, parents, families, and community. Parents are empowered as Leaders and work side-by-side with staff to make decisions and develop program activities and policies. The community is embraced as the program sees itself as an active member of the community and the early childhood field. Data is collected and used to make decisions that result in improved family and child outcomes. Family engagement approaches at this level are systemic, integrated, and comprehensive.

Use these markers to develop a rating of your program's present level of quality on each indicator you choose to assess. Use these ratings to create a composite picture of your family engagement efforts for the strategies you have assessed and inform discussions and decisions about next steps to enhance your program's family engagement practices.

ASSESSMENT KEY

COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING (INDICATOR)			
(Levels) ➙ (Markers) ↓	**STARTING POINT:** Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster family engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Program management/Providers engage families in collaborative decision- making.	Program management/Providers create opportunities for families to participate in collaborative decision-making. They ensure there are effective operating structures in place (e.g., Program Committees, and Governing Board) that give parents the opportunity to contribute to decision-making within programs. ❑ This best describes our program	Across program areas, staff engages parents in collaborative decision-making on a wide range of topics (e.g., curriculum planning and community assessment). ❑ This best describes our program.	Program management/Providers empower families and community partners to collaborate in decision-making in community- based programs, including public education. ❑ This best describes our program.
Program management /Providers support parents as they develop skills as advocates and Leaders.	Program management/Providers provide interested parents with training on how to be effective advocates and program leaders on behalf of their children. ❑ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers invite community partners to provide parents with in-house training to enhance their leadership and advocacy skills. They provide ongoing coaching and mentoring as parents practice new skills in the program (e.g., serve as role models for other parents, participate in focus groups, and work with providers and teachers to enhance curriculum). ❑ This best describes our program.	Program management//Providers encourage parents to attend advocacy and leadership training in the community. As parents practice and develop new skills (represent early childhood program at a community meeting, participate in the PTO of an older child's school, etc.) they educate and encourage other parents to become leaders and advocates. ❑ This best describes our program.

USING THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Family Engagement Assessment Tool is designed to help you gather and analyze information to assess the level of your program's current family engagement practices.

> ### THE ASSESSMENT IS FLEXIBLE
> **ONLY** INCLUDE THE INDICATORS THAT ARE APPLICABLE TO YOUR PROGRAM.

Collect Data

Choose a strategy. Go through the indicators and markers to clearly define your focus. Determine what sources of information will help you document your current level of performance or quality. Feel free to create your own markers to add to the ones offered here. (Be sure to share the markers you create with us so that we can share them with other programs.) Review and analyze documentation from your program reporting systems, any community needs-assessments, files on children and families, and other management systems that relate to the indicators and markers you want to examine.

Ask Partners for Input

To assure an accurate, well-rounded picture, ask for input from administrators, staff, current families, parents who were engaged with your program in the past, and community partners. This can be done in a number of ways, for example, through focus groups, open forums, short surveys, or individual interviews.

Analyze the Data

Engage your Family Engagement Self-Assessment Team in reviewing the data you have collected. Use it to guide discussion of your program's current status on the indicators you wish to focus. Encourage team members to examine whether a quality practice is widely and consistently observed in all parts of your program or implemented only in some instances or settings. This will help you see how far along you are in integrating high quality Family Engagement practices across your program. Document the main findings of your Family Engagement Self-Assessment Team. You will use this data to create your Family Engagement Program Action Plan.
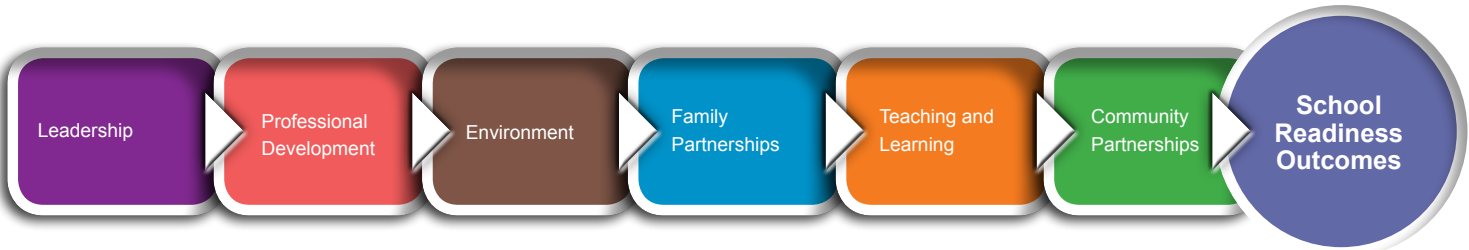
Assess

Determine the marker level that best describes your program's status for each indicator you are examining.

Engage the Family Engagement Self-Assessment Team in reviewing patterns of strengths and areas for improvement. Encourage team members to also consider possible links between the different indicators and elements. You may discover patterns of strength or areas needing improvement across several indicators that shed light on your overall program self-assessment.
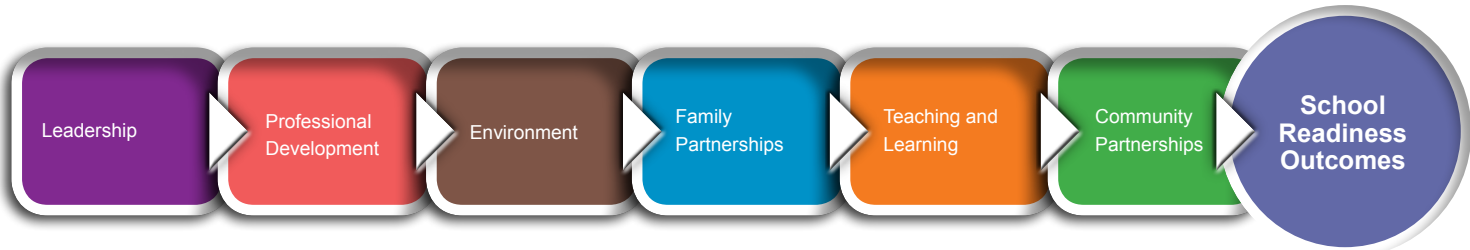
Communicate

Develop a strategy and materials to share the Family Engagement Self-Assessment results and your subsequent Action Plan with staff, families, and community partners. These materials can also be used as part of your strategy to recruit others to join efforts to enhance your family engagement practices. For example, your Family Engagement Self-Assessment Team members might present findings at meetings of the governing boards, management teams, staff, parents and community partners. Handouts and/or newsletter articles might include examples of what is working well and offer practical, hands-on suggestions of how people can contribute to enhance the program's family engagement efforts and the well-being of children and families.
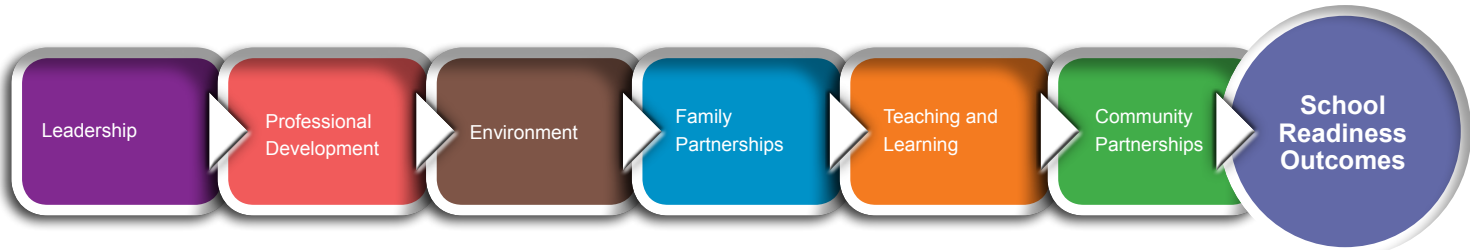
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PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

The provider, director, the Governing Board, parent committees, and management teams determine the way programs engage parents, families, and the community. To begin, program administration sets a clear vision and ambitious goals for family engagement. Program administration ensures program systems (such as communication and human resources) integrate practices that help parent and family engagement to flourish. Administration outlines strategic plans that bring systems, people, and activities together in a way that values staff and enhances parent and family engagement in the program.

AMBITIOUS GOALS			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Ambitious goals promote family engagement success in engaging families and community	Program management/Providers inspire staff and parents to reach for ambitious goals as they create capacity to engage families and community partners. Management communicates on a frequent basis the importance of family engagement practices and supports staff's understanding of how they promote family and child wellbeing. ❏ This best describes our program	Together with staff, program management/providers use the Family Engagement Framework to identify and implement strategies to promote family engagement. Then, program management/providers support staff to incorporate family's needs and goals into their daily planned activities and into their communications with families, other staff members and supervisors. ❏ This best describes our program	Together with staff, program management/providers regularly revisit and revise family engagement practices across program areas to promote family engagement. Together they examine accomplishments and set progressively higher goals for staff to enrich their practices with families. ❏ This best describes our program

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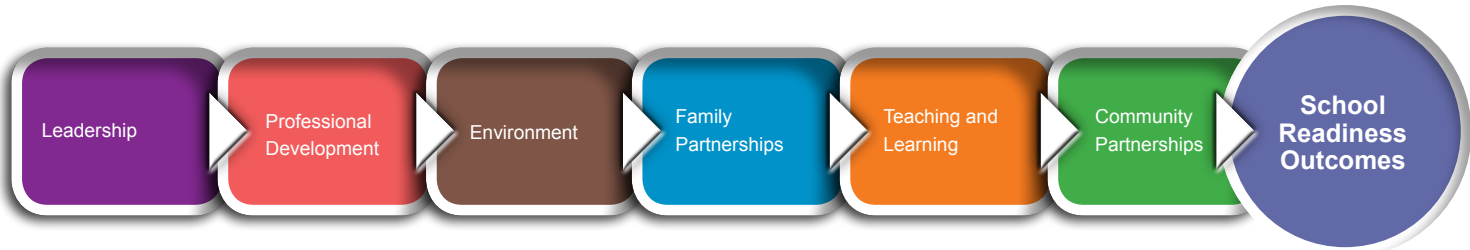| COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Families are part of collaborative decision making	Program management/Providers create opportunities for families to participate in collaborative decision-making. They ensure there are effective operating structures in place (e.g., Program Committees, Parent Meetings and Governing Board) that give parents the opportunity to contribute to decision-making within programs. ❏ This best describes our program	Across program areas, staff engages parents in collaborative decision- making on a wide range of topics (e.g., curriculum planning and community assessment). ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers empower families and community partners to collaborate in decision-making in community-based programs, including public education. ❏ This best describes our program
Program management/Providers support parents as they develop skills as advocates and leaders.	Program management/Providers provide interested parents with training on how to be effective advocates and program leaders on behalf of their children. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers invite community partners to provide parents with in-house training to enhance their leadership and advocacy skills. They provide ongoing coaching and mentoring as parents practice new skills in the program (e.g., serve as role models for other parents, participate in focus groups, and work with providers and teachers to enhance curriculum). ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers encourage parents to attend advocacy and leadership training in the community. As parents practice and develop new skills, (represent early childhood programs at a community meeting, participate in the PTO of an older child's school, etc.) they educate and encourage other parents to become leaders and advocates. ❏ This best describes our program

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS A SHARED PRIORITY FOR ALL STAFF			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Program management/Providers help all staff understand their unique contributions to family and community engagement.	Program management/Providers use written materials and ongoing interactions with managers and staff (e.g., job descriptions, initial orientation, ongoing training, supervision and evaluation) to communicate expectations for supporting family and community engagement. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers strengthen shared commitment to family engagement by personal example as they interact and communicate with staff, families, and community partners. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers build a program-wide, deepening commitment to family engagement by helping managers and staff realize they can make a positive difference. Program management/Providers help staff see how what they say and do each day can lead to positive, trusting relationships with families and community partners. They point out specific examples of how these relationships promote individual family's progress and how children and families progress toward School Readiness. ❏ This best describes our program
Program management/Providers make resources and staffing decisions that promote family and community engagement.	Program management/Providers ensure that staff has enough time to plan and work one-on-one with families regularly – in both center and home-based programs. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management /Providers adjust assignments and caseloads to allow for additional interactions based on family needs, strengths and relationships with individual staff (e.g., Family Service Workers, Home Visitors and teachers) and managers. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers reallocate resources and time of all staff members to provide individual families with support needed to reach their goals. These decisions are based upon data* about families' progress on meeting family and child goals (e.g., community assessment data, self-assessment data and data on staff-parent interactions). *Data can also mean information gathered through informal conversations, observations and meetings. ❏ This best describes our program

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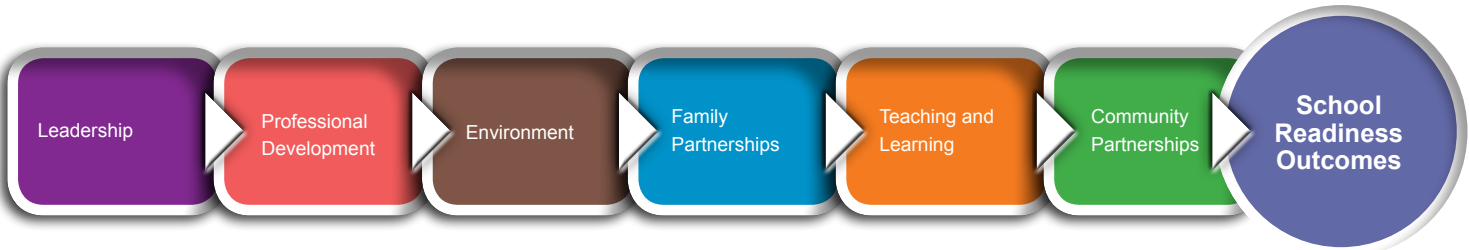
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To build a solid foundation in family engagement, professional development plans should be comprehensive and include training, supervision, recognition, and information about career options. Regular opportunities to come together as a community of learners helps providers, directors, and staff find mutual support and ideas for turning training and information into action. These opportunities are also important for cross-service area teams, such as teaching, family services, and home visiting professionals.

HIGH QUALITY TRAINING FOR ALL PROVIDERS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Building relationships with families requires specific skills and strategies.	Providers, directors and staff participate in training and mentoring to develop strong, positive and effective relationships with families, including vulnerable families and families dealing with adversity. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff build skills to produce supportive engagement that is reflective of individual families' cultures, strengths, and needs. Providers, directors and staff rely on ongoing mentoring and supervision to develop strategies to support families who may have challenging circumstances. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff initiate and sustain a "community of practice" as they exchange information and insights with staff from other agencies that provide family support. They meet regularly as "peer experts" to share questions and expertise to enhance family engagement practices and relationships with individual families. ❏ This best describes our program
Family engagement strategies are taught and incorporated into everyday practices.	All providers, directors and staff participate in training about what they as individuals can do and say in their daily interactions to promote family engagement. Training helps us all understand that "family engagement is everyone's business". ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff participate in training on specific family engagement strategies to promote progress with individual family goals and needs. Providers, directors and staff are familiar with, discuss, and use research on family and community engagement to enhance daily practice. ❏ This best describes our program	Program-wide professional development supports providers, directors and staff to work together across program areas to promote family engagement. It also promotes the use of data to inform decisions about program services and interactions with individual families over time. ❏ This best describes our program
Ongoing support promotes family engagement related skills.	Program supervisors provide feedback and coaching on family engagement related practices at each staff member's annual evaluation. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff who work most closely with families participate in ongoing individualized mentoring and support on effective goal-oriented family engagement practices. ❏ This best describes our program	All providers, directors and staff participate in family engagement related training, mentoring and support. Community partners are invited to take part whenever possible. ❏ This best describes our program

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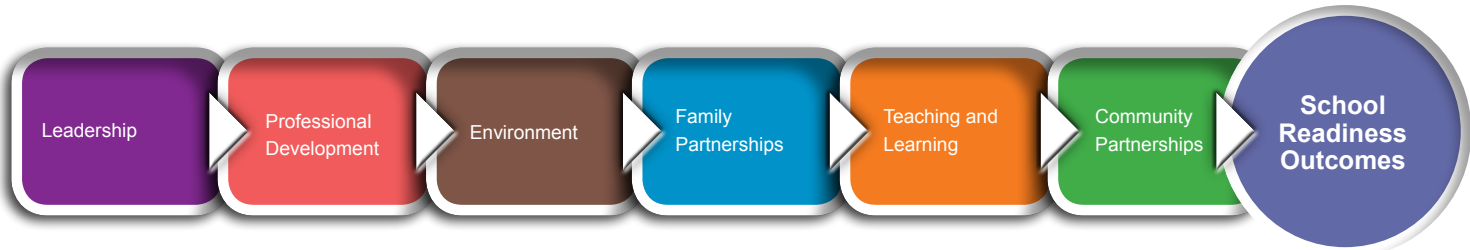| CAREER PATHWAYS AND RECOGNITION			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Career development	Program management/Providers provide opportunities for staff to gain skills and experience that can help lead to career advancement in the area of family engagement. ❏ This best describes our program	Effective staff members are groomed for, and promoted into, other positions as they become available. They receive ongoing support as they transition into their new roles. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers works with higher education and other community partners to identify career opportunities for staff. Together they create processes for staff to gain career-advancement credentials in child and family fields. (e.g. social work, education and health) ❏ This best describes our program
Parent volunteers' growing commitment and contributions can lead to expanded career development options.	Provider/Administration and staff invite all family members to visit and observe. They are also invited to volunteer to support learning in classrooms as well as to try follow-up activities with their children at home. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff document family interests and talents. Together with families, they co-create opportunities for parents to contribute to curriculum planning, learning opportunities and ongoing child assessment on-site and at home. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff encourage increased levels of responsibility for parents to work with groups of children along with staff. Programs go beyond documenting volunteers as non-federal share resources to tracking their contributions to other families' progress with family engagement. Management and staff encourage interested parents to apply to work in the program and/or community to support children and families. ❏ This best describes our program
Effective efforts to promote family engagement are honored.	Program management/Providers recognize staff and parent volunteers for their job performance in the area of family engagement. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers recognize the accomplishments of staff in enhancing family engagement across program areas. ❏ This best describes our program	Together with community partners, Program management/Providers recognize collaborations between all staff and parents to promote children's and families' well-being in the program and throughout the community. ❏ This best describes our program

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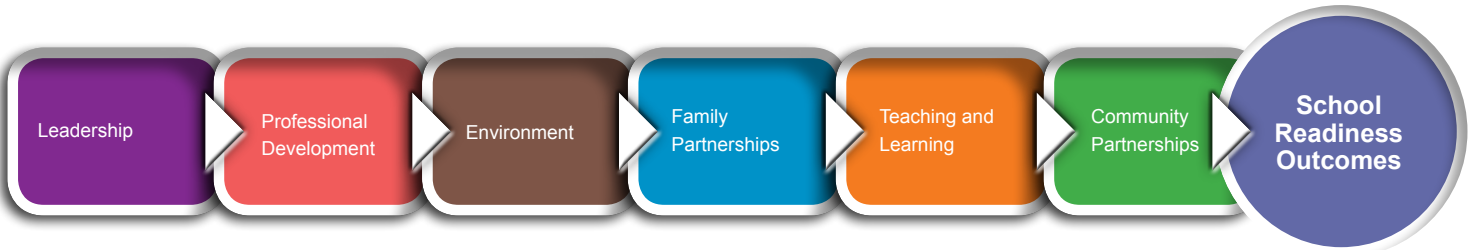
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT

In an effective program environment, families feel welcomed, valued, and respected by the program staff. Program administration supports all staff to build strong relationships with each other and with families and communities. Providers, staff and families work together to set expectations and support family goals and children's learning and development in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. Two-way communication and relationship-building with families is adapted to meet changing family and community circumstances.
In addition, opportunities are provided for family support and development through the family partnership process and through intentional parent/family peer groups within the program and community.

WELCOMING AND INVITING SETTINGS			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
The space supports interactions and relationships.	Physical space is calm, clean, safe and accessible. It reflects respect for the language and culture of children and their families (e.g., documentation of projects, artwork, and family photos). Culturally and linguistically appropriate information is available.	In a dedicated, welcoming, and comfortable space for adults, parents can drop-in and connect with providers, staff and peers.	Providers, directors, staff and families use feedback as they work together to make areas more welcoming and conducive to social interactions. When appropriate, the program shares space with the community to enhance connections between community agencies and families.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

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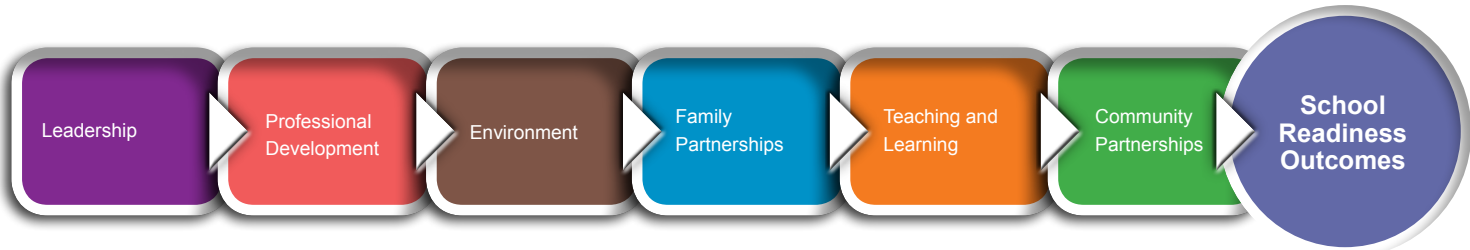| CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC RESPONSIVENESS			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Understanding of families' cultures deepens, builds trust and promotes engagement.	Program management/Providers and staff talk with and learn from families about their home cultures (e.g., family structure, preferred child-rearing practices). This information is used to affirm families' culture and history in program policies, resources, activities and in staff professional development. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers and staff use new information and insights gained about families' cultures, and their own, as conversations continue and trust grows. Program management/Providers and staff continually tailor services and systems to be more culturally and linguistically responsive. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers, staff, and community agencies discuss conflicting assumptions, complex feelings and challenging issues. Together with families, they design, implement and evaluate activities that remove cultural and linguistic barriers to family engagement and strengthen relationships with families of different cultures and backgrounds. ❏ This best describes our program
Materials and resources increasingly reflect families' cultures and languages.	Providers, directors and staff support families as lifelong educators by offering learning materials (books, games and other learning media) for children and parents that reflect families' cultures.	Providers, directors and staff regularly invite families to provide feedback about culturally appropriate books and other learning materials and suggest additional ones for children and parents.	Families, providers and staff create culturally appropriate and relevant learning materials together. These extend beyond foods and holidays to include a broad range of activities. This process, and the materials that result, strengthen family engagement with the program, and parent engagement with children. They also expand parent and child learning.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

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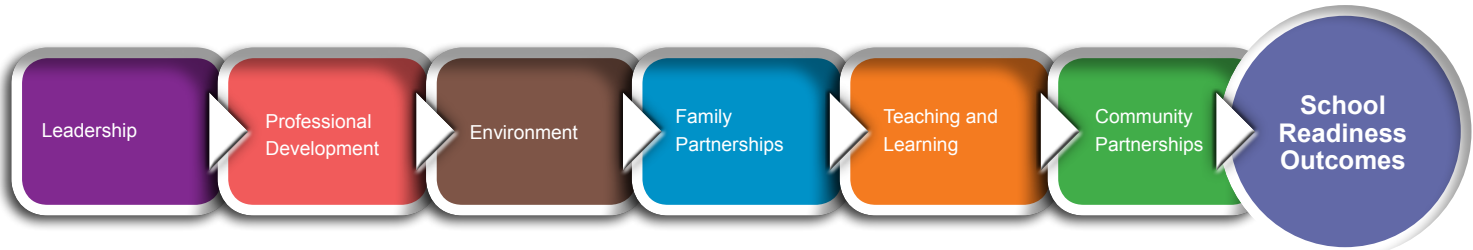| SYSTEM OF REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Communication becomes increasingly family-centered and responsive.	Program management/Providers and staff create clear communication channels to promote regular dialog with families about child progress and program matters in ways that deepen trust and relationships. Families each have a designated contact person. The use of technology is tailored to different families and ages of family members. Interpreters are available as needed. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers and staff are proactive in communicating with families. They regularly ask families for feedback and suggestions about additional information they need. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors, staff and parents talk together regularly about how to improve communication. ❏ This best describes our program
Professional ethics guide interactions with and about families.	Program management/Providers model professional ethics when interacting with staff and families. Providers, directors and staff do not share confidential information about a child or family with other families or with other providers or staff who do not also work with that child/family. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers provide ongoing training to staff and support in the area of professional ethics (e.g., confidentiality, boundaries). ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Providers model professional ethics when working with community partners. They take an active stance against negativity and unprofessionalism when talking about families. This remains true even when challenging issues are addressed and emotions run high. Codes of ethics from NAEYC and other organizations supporting families and young children are shared. ❏ This best describes our program

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FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

To build high-quality family partnerships, families work with providers, directors and staff to identify, achieve and act on their goals and aspirations. To strengthen family partnerships, staff and families build ongoing, respectful, and goal-oriented relationships. To promote progress, providers, directors, staff and families use program and community supports and resources.
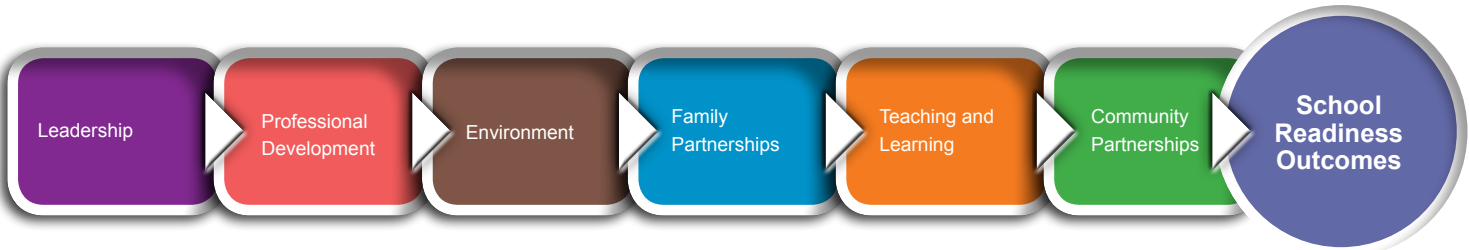
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RESPECTFUL, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND PARENTS			
Program management/Provider supports relationships between staff and families through professional development, technology, and their own relationships with staff.	Program management/Provider developing trusting relationships with staff that are models for the relationships staff builds with families. Respect, caring, commitment, and flexibility characterize these relationships.	Program management/Provider expand staff development to tailor training, coaching, and reflective supervision to help build trusting relationships with all types of families, from all cultures and backgrounds, including those who are vulnerable and severely stressed.	Program Administration/Provider create an easy-to-use system that documents the quality of relationships between staff and parents. It includes feedback from families, documentation of reflective supervision efforts, and perspectives from community partners that are skilled in providing family support and mental health. Provider, director and staff use this information to enhance their relationships with individual parents.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program
Peer support and learning opportunities are enhanced.	Program management/Provider and staff provide informal opportunities for parents to form connections with peers.	Program management/Provider and staff provide opportunities for peer networking, support and learning opportunities among parents.	Parents work with each other and with provider to design and enhance opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and support.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

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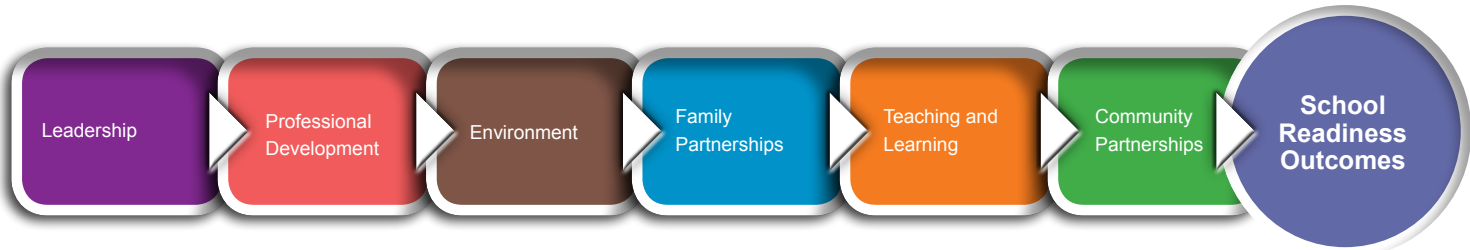| FAMILIES ARE PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING AND ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS			
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Providers, directors and staff partnerships with families grow and deepen.	Provider, director and staff find opportunities to learn about the family's strengths, needs, and goals as an entry to this relationship.	Provider, director, staff and families meet regularly to discuss their children and to strengthen relationships with family members. These meetings reflect their joint efforts, new circumstances and opportunities.	Together, provider, director, staff and families decide on the data and information they will use to monitor trends in family strengths, needs and goals. They use this data/information to track their joint efforts and progress in reaching child and family goals. Learning to use data/information contributes to families' success in supporting children's development and learning. Using data and information together also strengthens parent-staff relationships.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program
Providers, directors and staff help family members recognize their own contributions to their progress.	Providers, directors and staff provide ongoing information and support to families in using program services and community resources (education, career development, health) to achieve family goals and promote the wellbeing of children.	Providers, directors and staff help individual families see how their use of services leads to progress. They help families overcome challenges in achieving their goals.	Families, providers and staff affirm the vital roles that families play in nurturing their children's learning and development. Together, they acknowledge and celebrate family members' growing knowledge and skills, and build upon these in their work together to support children.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

Leadership → Professional Development → Environment → Family Partnerships → Teaching and Learning → Community Partnerships → **School Readiness Outcomes**

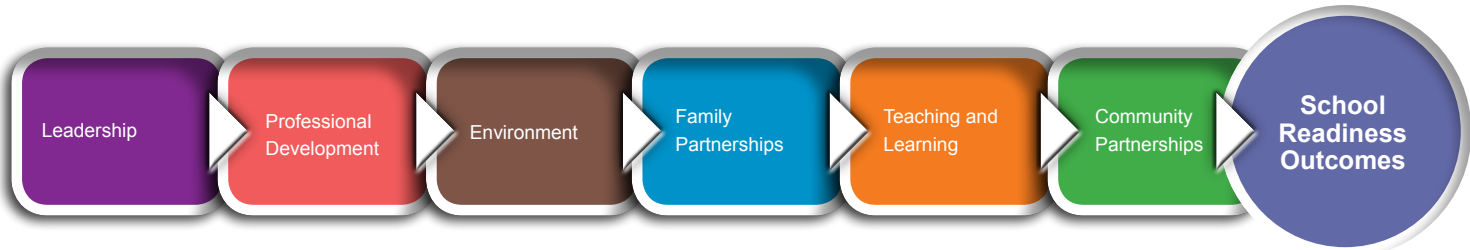| **FAMILIES ARE PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING AND ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS (CONTINUED)**			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Family partnerships open the door to families' use of resources and services.	Providers, directors and staff develop trusting relationships with families that make for responsive family referrals and effective information-sharing about program and community services and resources. ❏ This best describes our program	Providers, directors and staff use knowledge of families to tailor referrals to services based on the strengths, needs, and styles of individual family members. ❏ This best describes our program	Provider/director/staff-family partnerships empower families to independently seek and use community services that are tailored to their strengths, needs and cultures. ❏ This best describes our program
Parents receive training and support for transitions.	Programs provide families with information, training and connections to future early care and educational settings to help facilitate the transition process for parents and children. ❏ This best describes our program	Programs ensure families have the skills to communicate with other early childhood programs and schools about their child's accomplishments, interests and needs and can refer to child assessment data to support their observations. ❏ This best describes our program	Programs provide opportunities for parents to create relationships with other families and to participate in parent groups in schools to which children will transition. ❏ This best describes our program

Leadership → Professional Development → Environment → Family Partnerships → Teaching and Learning → Community Partnerships → **School Readiness Outcomes**

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Families should be engaged as equal partners in their children's learning and development. Providers, directors, staff and families work together as equals to build strong relationships that support information-sharing with each other about children's learning and developmental progress. Programs ensure that families have access to information about their child and that the information is understandable and meaningful. Parents share their knowledge about their child's progress at home. Together, staff and families use this information to set and work toward goals for the child in the program, home and community.
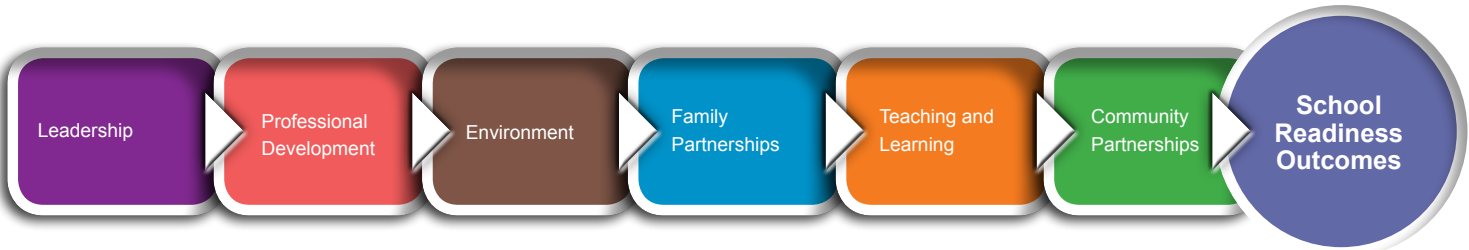
FAMILIES GROW INTO THEIR ROLE AS EDUCATORS AT HOME			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Supporting Families as Lifelong Educators for their children.	Providers, directors and staff work to develop relationships with families that allow them to effectively address children's learning needs and support families in the vital role they play in their children's learning and development.	Providers, directors and staff model specific learning strategies for families to help them promote children's learning during daily routines and play time. Providers, directors and staff sustain families' interest in learning new strategies by reflecting with them on children's progress over time.	Together, families and providers/directors/staff identify new opportunities for families to support children's healthy development and learning. Families recognize that they are children's "forever" teachers.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program
Providers, directors, staff and families promote children's development and learning in increasingly collaborative ways.	Providers, directors and staff welcome families to participate in program activities. Providers, directors and staff provide basic information about children's learning and development during home visits, daily conversations, on bulletin boards and in e-mails.	Providers, directors and staff invite families to partner in planning activities in the program or at home to promote children's development and learning.	Providers, directors and staff and families engage each other as partners in planning classroom or home activities that promote children's development and learning. Both have a clear understanding of what each contributes and what each can expect in their exchange of information. They use what they learn from each other to plan and implement learning activities for children at home or in the program.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

Leadership → Professional Development → Environment → Family Partnerships → Teaching and Learning → Community Partnerships → School Readiness Outcomes

FAMILIES' USE OF CHILD ASSESSMENT INFORMATION PROMOTES CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Parents are informed about the purpose of assessment. Providers/Staff has scheduled meetings/parent-teacher conferences to share assessment data/information with families.	Providers, directors and staff seek input from families in developing goals for children and assessing children's progress. This includes families with young children with disabilities as they participate in IFSP and IEP planning and progress monitoring.	Providers, directors, staff and families regularly share information and observations about curriculum activities. Providers, directors and staff invite parents to be part of the assessment process and explain that their input leads to a more complete, accurate picture of their child. Providers, directors and staff share child assessment data with families and request their impressions regularly. Child assessments are used to engage parents in determining how they can contribute to fostering their children's progress. Providers, directors and staff support and monitor those efforts and work with families to adjust and tailor goals for their children during the year.	Together with families, providers/directors/staff regularly discusse formal assessments and share child-related questions, concerns and successes to create a picture of the child as a whole. Both home and program observations and assessments are used. Providers, directors, staff, families and community partners regularly use this data/information to decide how best to support children's learning and development in the program and in the community. Providers, directors, and staff work with families to develop long-term goals for all of their children and family members, chart clear pathways toward those goals and prepare parents to continue to advocate for collaborative decision-making as they transition into other early learning environments and Kindergarten.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

Leadership → Professional Development → Environment → Family Partnerships → Teaching and Learning → Community Partnerships → School Readiness Outcomes

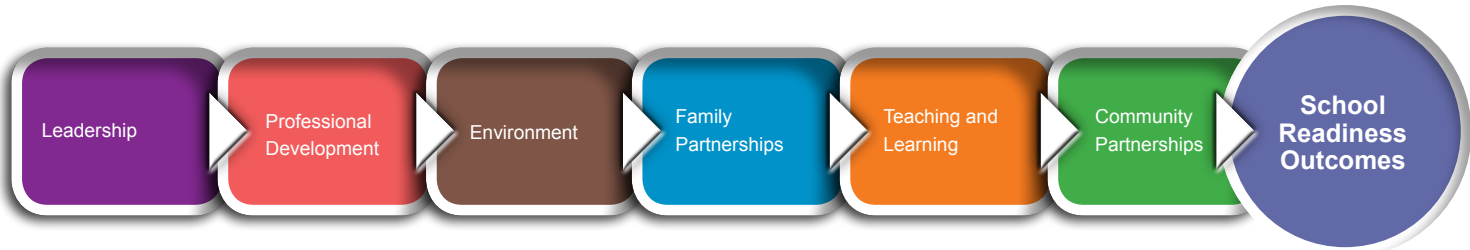| SUPPORTING POSITIVE PARENT- CHILD RELATIONSHIPS			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Shared observations of family strengths and child behavior open the door to positive change in child outcomes.	Providers, directors and staff focus on family and child strengths as an entry into relationships and conversations about children.	In the home and program, parents see that providers, directors and staff interact with each child as an individual, and with respect and authentic caring. As a result, trust deepens and communication about each child's strengths and needs becomes more open.	Providers, directors, staff and parents observe and learn from each other's interactions with the child. Providers, directors, staff and parents use their observations about the child's behavior as data. This guides the decisions they make together about their roles as the child's educators.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program
Providers, directors and staff strengthen their partnership with families to address challenging child behaviors in positive ways.	Providers, directors and staff try to understand what children might be thinking/feeling when they behave in challenging ways. They use this information to decide how to discourage such behavior while promoting children's self-control. Providers, directors and staff take steps to prevent challenging behavior whenever possible.	Providers, directors and staff discuss challenging behaviors with families in ways that demonstrate and strengthen the trust and respect between them. In their discussions, providers, directors and staff support families to help keep the child's best interest in the forefront even when strong feelings arise.	Providers, directors, staff and parents work together to prevent challenging behaviors and address them in positive ways when they occur. This supports the child's healthy development and social competence and the families' engagement with the child and program.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

Leadership | Professional Development | Environment | Family Partnerships | Teaching and Learning | Community Partnerships | School Readiness Outcomes

SUPPORTING POSITIVE PARENT- CHILD RELATIONSHIPS (CONTINUED)			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Child assessment data informs work with community partners.	Programs develop school readiness goals that are in line with those of their community. Programs participate in or provide training on transitions. This strengthens the relationships with other early care and educational settings and promotes the use of child assessment data during transitions from birth through age eight (8).	Programs share school-readiness goals and related data with community partners. Their relationships and collaborations continue to develop.	Programs extend relationships with community partners beyond sharing assessment data. Data is used to drive decisions intended to improve transitions. Together they work to implement their shared commitment to ambitious school-readiness goals.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

Leadership → Professional Development → Environment → Family Partnerships → Teaching and Learning → Community Partnerships → School Readiness Outcomes
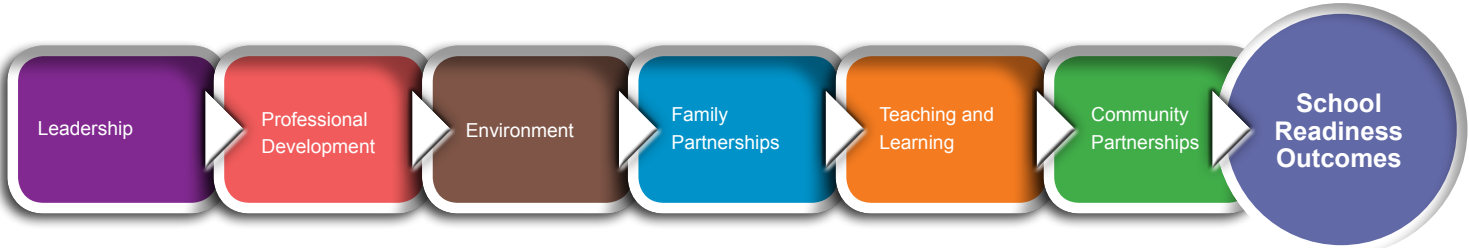
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Successful community partnerships support families' interests and needs and encourage parent and family engagement in children's learning. Providers, directors, staff and families collaborate with community, health, mental health, social service, and school partners to build peer networks, to link families and children to needed services, and to support successful transitions for children and families.

COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN PROGRAM AND WITH LARGER COMMUNITY			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Growing support for families as educators in communities.	Providers, directors and staff provide information about community resources (e.g., family literacy programs, and parenting workshops) to families. Representatives of trusted community organizations meet and present their offerings to families (e.g., at a parent meeting, and a community resource fair). ❏ This best describes our program	Together with families, Providers, directors and staff provide feedback to community partners about services that are most easily accessed and effectively used, as well as about barriers and service gaps. ❏ This best describes our program	Families, providers, directors, staff and community partners use information from families' experiences to decide how best to get the word out about existing community services, and to determine how to enhance them, remove barriers, and fill in service gaps. ❏ This best describes our program
Family engagement moves into the community.	Providers, directors and staff link families to program/ community opportunities for peer networking, volunteer activities, internships and other experiences that expand their personal and professional interests. ❏ This best describes our program	Parents form relationships with parent-to-parent organizations or K-12 parent groups to facilitate their child's transition to community programs. ❏ This best describes our program	Parents serve as mentors for one another and connect each other with alumni parents/families, elders and professionals in the community to promote advocacy, administration development and family engagement in the community. ❏ This best describes our program

| Leadership | Professional Development | Environment | Family Partnerships | Teaching and Learning | Community Partnerships | School Readiness Outcomes |

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT FAMILY WELL BEING			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Staff and families participate in service development.	Program management/Provider, staff and families collaborate to enhance program services to families. They address obstacles to families' awareness and use of services to meet their needs and goals. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Provider, staff and families collaborate with community partners. The Maryland Family Engagement Framework guides their work together to help families receive the services they need to reach their goals. ❏ This best describes our program	Program management/Provider, staff and families represent the program in inter-agency coalitions with community partners who serve the same families. Together they address obstacles to services and help ensure families receive needed services to reach family outcomes. ❏ This best describes our program

| Leadership | Professional Development | Environment | Family Partnerships | Teaching and Learning | Community Partnerships | School Readiness Outcomes |

SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONS			
	STARTING POINT: Implementing Practices Related To Best Practice	**PROGRESSING:** Demonstrating Practices that Bolster Family Engagement	**INNOVATING:** Implementing Family Engagement Practices that are Systemic, Integrated and Comprehensive
Program management/Provider provides support for transitions.	Program management/Providers establish and maintain procedures and supports for successful transitions of all enrolled children and families.	Program management/Providers build relationships among community partners so that transition efforts are mutual, (Early care programs, Head Start programs, public schools and all school staff and managers are equally engaged in classroom observations, home visits, outreach to families and ongoing communication.	Program management/Providers model effective family and child centered transitions for community programs. They share insights and lessons learned from the program's transition efforts with community partners.
	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program	❏ This best describes our program

CREATING A FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

A written Family Engagement Action Plan informs yourlong and short range goals in addition to helping you identify the family engagement challenges to be addressed. This plan focuses your program's efforts to enhance family engagement.

Creating an Action Plan provides an opportunity to:

- create a realistic roadmap for change by organizing your ideas into concrete steps;

- track your progress;

- identify goals and then evaluate if and when they are met;

- adapt plans and goals in light of unexpected opportunities or obstacles;

- affirm existing family engagement skills encouraging administration and staff to build on strengths as they develop new skills;

- continue positive change over time; and

- promote commitment to improvement in family engagement by bringing parents and community partners together with staff and management.

Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Barriers

Creating a Family Engagement Action Plan can be helpful, but can also pose its own challenges. For example, it may be a challenge to:

- find time for busy team members to meet;

- come to consensus on areas to prioritize;

- decide on realistic goals;

- identify steps;

- agree on a realistic time frame; and

- acknowledge signs of progress.

To overcome challenges, it can be helpful to:

- create a shared vision of the benefits of engagement for children, families, the community, and program staff and management;

- build trust and promote a sense of collaboration among family members, community partners, and program staff and management;

- keep communication flowing so that decisions are recorded and partners who may miss a meeting can stay informed; and

- return to the vision and its benefits to keep challenges in perspective.

Components of a Family Engagement Action Plan

The components of a Family Engagement Action Plan will vary from program to program based on a unique set of resources, demands, participants, partners, and needs. We have developed a template you can use to personalize your plan and a sample showing how it might be used (see next page). This Family Engagement Action Plan format can be used to enhance your current program planning efforts and long and short term goals.

This form provides a place for you to identify:

- Desired family engagement outcomes

- Your objectives and goal(s)

- Strategies from the Family Engagement Framework

- The indicators on which you are currently focused

- Action step(s)

- Resources available

- Person(s) responsible

- Time frame(s)

- Measure(s) of success

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Desired Family Engagement Outcome(s) (from the goals of the Framework):

Objective(s):

Strategy	Indicator	Action Step	Resources	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame(s)	Measure(s) of Success

GETTING STARTED ON YOUR ACTION PLAN

Begin with the end in mind. What do you want to accomplish? What are the desired outcomes for Family Engagement that you want to enhance? (In the sample Family Engagement Action Plan below, the Desired Family Engagement goal is Family Well-Being.)

Identify an outcome or goal(s) to strengthen family engagement and improve outcomes for children and families. To choose, you may want to ask:

• Is there a goal within reach that will give you an early success on which you can build toward more challenging ones? (This may sound similar to your work with families – start with an early success and build from there.)

• Is there a goal that with focused effort could be moved from Starting Point to Innovating to build interest and excitement about additional change?

(In the sample, you might have chosen a different objective to enhance Family Well-being. For example, if your focus was on safety, your objective might be: Offer opportunities for every parent to be trained on first aid or CPR.)

Identify the strategies (Program Foundations and Program Impact Areas) that you will focus on to meet the goal.

• Most goals will require work in more than one of the strategy areas (in the sample below, professional development and family partnerships are both involved) and coordination of your work across the foundations and impact areas.

• Identify the indicator(s) that you will focus on to meet the goal.

• Many goals will involve more than one indicator. Consider how they link together.   Efforts on one indicator can reinforce efforts on another.

Define the specific, concrete action steps you will use to make progress in each strategy area.

• Identify the people and any other resources you want to engage to support change or enhancement in this priority area.

Select a point person(s) from the team who will be responsible for seeing that the next steps toward implementing these action steps are taken and for reporting setbacks if they arise.

Set a time frame for accomplishing tasks. Your time frame should include check-in times.

• Check in on progress being made on specific tasks and the Family Engagement Action Plan itself. Keep in mind that your Family Engagement Action Plan is a road map, a way of tracking progress that you can adapt as needed.

Identify a measure of success that will indicate your goal has been met.

• If a goal is to be of any value, there must be a way to accurately define and measure it. For example, see the sample Family Engagement Action Plan. Success is measured in a variety of ways which include: a) staff and families are able to describe asset-building practices and related benefits; b) ongoing monitoring documentation that confirms all staff members are assisting families with asset-building strategies; c) a specific percentage of families incorporating asset- building strategies into their family partnership agreement; and d) resources in the community are observed to be established, available, and used to support families in obtaining their asset-building goals.

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SAMPLE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Desired Family Engagement Outcome(s) (from the goals of the Framework): *Family Well-being: Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased family security.*

Objective(s): Offer increased opportunities for families to learn about and enhance asset-building strategies.

Strategy	Indicator	Action Step	Resources	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame(s)	Measure(s) of Success
Program Leadership	*Ambitious Goals*	*Expand program policies, procedures, goals and opportunities to encompass asset-building strategies for staff and families.*	*ECLKC (Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center), National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations (NCPMFO) material, Community Resources and Partners*	*Management Team, Board, Parent Committees*	*Begin during summer planning phase and implement in the fall.*	*Provider, staff and families are knowledgeable about asset-building strategies and can describe the associated benefits.*
Professional Development	*High Quality Training for All Staff*	*Insert asset-building strategies as a standing agenda topic during monthly staff meetings to familiarize all staff with the concept, strategies, and opportunities for families.*	*ECLKC, materials, Community Resources and Partners*	*Management Team*	*Begin with pre-service training sessions and continue monthly*	*Ongoing monitoring indicates all staff members are able to assist families with asset-building strategies as part of their routine practice.*
Family Partnerships	*Families are partners in developing and achieving their goals for their children and families.*	*Staff and families collaborate to identify and share information related to asset building opportunities in the community.*	*Financial education Savings and Individual Development Accounts, Managing credit and debt,* *Tax credits and tax filing assistance*	*Management Team and Parent Committee*	*Begin in early fall with the intention of sharing with* *all families by the first weeks of October.*	*Of the families who choose to set goals with staff, 10% will explore and/or adopt goals around asset-building strategies.*
Community Partnerships	*Collaborative relationships for comprehensive services*	*Provider, staff, families, and communities participate in collaborations that respond to family goals and needs around asset-building strategies.*	*Board Members Local banks* *Local tax entities (EITC)* *Local housing authorities(savings programs and information sessions)*	*Management Team, Board, and Parent Committee*	*Begin in late fall after assessing family asset-building strategies and implement any new opportunities by January.*	*Resources relating to parent's goals are established, available, and used.*

In this Family Engagement Action Plan, program foundations and program impact area strategies are connected. Each contributes to **Family Well-Being** through asset-building strategies. **Program Leadership**, that includes parents, creates a foundation of policies and procedures that are incorporated into **Professional Development** opportunities for all staff. This, in turn, provides staff with information they need to strengthen **Family Partnerships** as they work with families to individualize opportunities for asset-building strategies in the community. As families and staff move forward in exploring asset-building strategies, together they strengthen **Community Partnerships** as they work with community partners to identify and use relevant community resources.

YOUR PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

As you conduct your self-assessments and plan your next steps, it will be helpful to keep in focus the shared vision that your program has developed for the children, families, and community you all serve. What is your vision of the future as parents and families become more engaged in their children's development and learning? (Briefly describe how the lives of children and families, and your program, will be changed as you enhance family engagement practices.)

Your Vision for Family Engagement in Your Program

Desired Family Engagement Outcome(s) (from the goals of the Framework):

Objective(s):

Strategy	Indicator	Action Step	Resources	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame(s)	Measure(s) of Success

FINAL REFLECTION

This guide was created to help you take a step back to learn about your program, and then decide how to collaborate and move forward in the best interests of the children and families you serve. Be open to your successes as well as areas that need improvement and take advantage of this opportunity to enhance family engagement and the lives of the children and families you serve.

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