



Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

EVIDENCE THAT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROMOTES SCHOOL SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD OF EVERY AGE

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

NO. 1 IN A SERIES SPRING 2006

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The family seems to be the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the child's development. Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful, and what few effects are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued.¹

—Urie Bronfenbrenner

This brief is dedicated to Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) whose pioneering research influenced the work of Harvard Family Research Project.

INTRODUCTION

Family involvement matters for young children's cognitive and social development. But what do effective involvement processes look like, and how do they occur? This research brief summarizes the latest evidence base on effective involvement—that is, the research studies that link family involvement in early childhood to outcomes and programs that have been evaluated to show what works.

The conceptual framework guiding this research review is *complementary learning*. Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) believes that for children and youth to be successful from birth through adolescence, there must be an array of learning supports around them. These learning supports include families, early childhood programs, schools, out-of-school time programs and activities, higher education, health and social service agencies, businesses, libraries, museums, and other community-based institutions. HFRP calls this network of supports *complementary learning*. Complementary learning is characterized by discrete linkages that work together to encourage

consistent learning and developmental outcomes for children. These linkages are continuously in place from birth through adolescence, but the composition and functions of this network changes over time as children mature.²

Family Involvement Makes a Difference is a set of research briefs that examines one set of complementary learning linkages: family involvement in the home and school. As the first in the series, this brief focuses on the linkages among the family, early childhood education settings, and schools. Future papers will examine family involvement in elementary school, middle school, and high school settings. Taken together, these briefs make the case that family involvement predicts

attitudes and practices, and early childhood programs' expectations and support of family involvement. The evidence base currently suggests three family involvement processes aid in creating this match and promoting healthy outcomes: parenting, home-school relationships, and responsibility for learning outcomes. (See Figure 1 on page 2.) *Parenting* refers to the attitudes, values, and practices of parents in raising young children. *Home-school relationships* are the formal and informal connections between the family and educational setting. *Responsibility for learning* is an aspect of parenting that places emphasis on activities in the home and community that promote learning skills in the young child.

Substantial research supports family involvement, and a growing body of intervention evaluations demonstrates that family involvement can be strengthened with positive results for young children and their school readiness.

children's academic achievement and social development as they progress from early childhood programs through K–12 schools and into higher education.

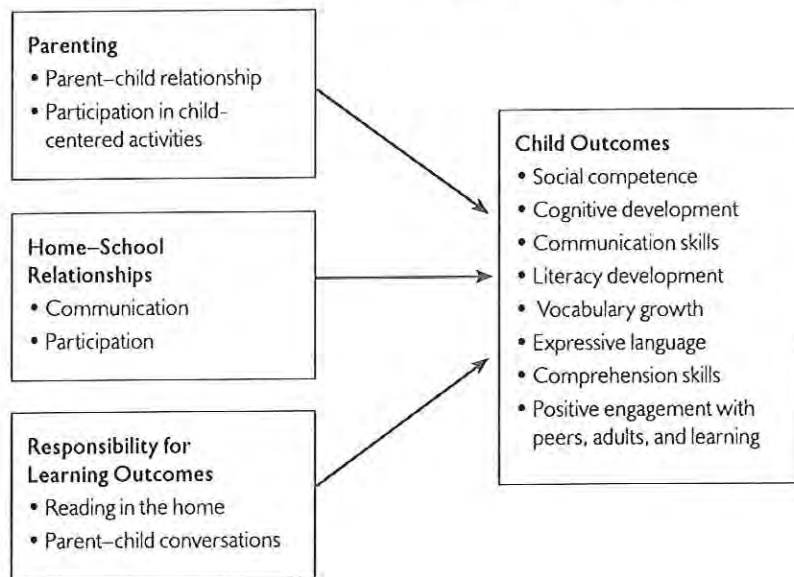
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Substantial research supports family involvement, and a growing body of intervention evaluations demonstrates that family involvement can be strengthened with positive results for young children and their school readiness. To achieve these results, it is necessary to match children's developmental needs, parents'

These processes do not represent all the ways in which families support their children's education. For example, participation in home visitation programs, parent leadership, community organizing, and participation in school decision making are not represented in this review. Readers must therefore keep in mind that family involvement covers other processes beyond those described in this set of briefs.

The sources of this research brief primarily come from the field of human development and psychology. A detailed explanation of the methods for this brief can be found in Appendix I.

Figure 1. Processes of family involvement and young children's outcomes



development.⁷ Children who play at home and whose parents understand the importance of play in development are likely to demonstrate prosocial and independent behavior in the classroom.⁸ In addition, parent participation with their children in activities such as arts and crafts is associated with children's literacy development.⁹

However, parenting is embedded in social and cultural contexts that influence parenting styles. Poverty is related to access to fewer social parenting supports, which in turn is associated with maternal depression and less nurturing parenting behavior.¹⁰ Moreover, parent-child activities are culturally influenced such that activities that are characteristic of one ethnic group might not be characteristic of another.¹¹ For example, teaching letters, words, songs, and music is more characteristic of Black non-Hispanic groups, while reading and telling stories is more typical of White non-Hispanic groups.¹²

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MATTERS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Young children benefit most from their school years if they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Not all children, however, come to kindergarten equally prepared. Too many low-income students of color start school far behind their economically advantaged White peers. Early childhood programs now recognize that they alone cannot prepare children for kindergarten. Instead, they need the support of families and communities. To acquire this support, they need to encourage the family involvement processes that research has shown to be effective in encouraging children's learning and socio-emotional development.

Early childhood—in this case, defined as the period from birth to age 5—is a time of life during which significant transformations take place. The newborn infant, equipped with basic reflexes, develops into an active, curious child capable of walking, talking, and pretending. Children's vocabulary increases rapidly, and they acquire the ability to remember experiences, sustain attention, count, and recognize letters. Through interactions with adults and peers, young children develop self-concepts and self-esteem, improve emotional self-regulation, and form their first friendships.³ In short, the

early years are important because they are the period during which children acquire the basic skills that serve as the foundation for later learning. Moreover, these years are the time when parents' beliefs about their children's abilities are shaped and when children's own academic self-concepts begin to form.⁴

PARENTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Parenting is the family involvement process that includes the attitudes, values, and practices of parents in raising young children. Nurturing, warm, and responsive parent-child relationships and parental participation in child-centered activities relate to positive learning outcomes in early childhood.

Nurturing relationships provide an emotional refuge for children, fostering the development of a healthy sense of belonging, self-esteem, and well-being. When parents are sensitive and responsive to children's emotions, children are more likely to become socially competent and show better communication skills.⁵ Warm, reciprocal parent-child interactions and fewer life stresses in the home facilitate children's prosocial behavior and ability to concentrate.⁶

Parent participation in child-centered activities, specifically play, is also important for children's social and emotional

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

In the early childhood years, the home-school relationship refers to the formal and informal connections between families and their young children's educational settings.¹⁵ Both participation in preschool-based activities and regular communication between families and teachers are related to young children's outcomes. Parent participation practices can include attending parent-teacher conferences, participating in extended class visits, and helping with class activities. Such participation is associated with child language, self-help, social, motor, adaptive, and basic school skills.¹⁶ Maintaining relationships with fathers is important too. In a study of low-income African American fathers, involvement in Head Start was associated with higher levels of children's emotion regulation.¹⁷

The frequency of parent-teacher contact and involvement at the early childhood education site is also associated with preschool performance.¹⁸ Parents who maintain direct and regular contact with the early educational setting and experience fewer barriers to involvement have children who demonstrate positive engagement with peers, adults, and learning.¹⁹ In addition, teachers' perceptions of positive parental attitudes and beliefs

about preschool are associated with fewer behavior problems and higher language and math skills among children.²⁰

Not only do strong home–school relationships matter for children's outcomes during the early childhood years, but the benefits persist over time. For example, family involvement activities such as keeping in touch with a teacher, volunteering in the classroom and attending school activities were related to children's promotion after kindergarten into the first grade.²¹ More frequent parental engagement in school activities is important—probably because it contributes to parents' greater knowledge of the school program and familiarity with school experiences. Moreover, parental presence in school may model for the child the importance of schooling.

The home–school relationship buffers the negative impacts of poverty on the academic and behavioral outcomes of poor children. For example, children of low-income parents who participated in Chicago Child–Parent Centers (CPC) were more prepared for kindergarten, were less likely to be referred to special education, and later had higher rates of eighth grade reading achievement and high school completion and lower rates of grade retention.²² (See text box.)

Why do the benefits of home–school relationships sustain over time? One possible answer is that family involvement in early childhood sets the stage for involvement in future school settings. For instance, family involvement in the CPC program during the early years was associated with greater parent involvement in the elementary school years, which in turn was related with positive youth outcomes in high school.²³ Thus, early positive patterns in a home–school relationship bridge children's experiences over time and across educational settings.

Because of the importance of linkages across settings over time, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers recently have begun to focus their attention on the period of transition from preschool to formal schooling. Although research in this area has not focused on which transition practices relate to specific child outcomes, there is growing consensus that both early childhood settings and elementary schools have a responsibility to support families and help them to sustain their family

involvement trajectories. Unfortunately, as children transition to kindergarten, teacher and family contact decreases, and there is a shift away from parent-initiated communication.²⁴ Logistical barriers (e.g., schools generating kindergarten class lists late in the summer, no summer salary for teachers, little teacher training in this area, etc.) hinder ideal transition practices.²⁵ Yet schools that provide more opportunities for family involvement and occasions for nontraditional contact—such as home visits, parent discussion groups, parent resource rooms, and home lending libraries—enjoy increased levels of family participation.²⁶

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

Responsibility for learning outcomes refers to an aspect of parenting that involves placing emphasis on educational activities that promote school success. In early childhood, this family involvement process tends to focus on how parents can support children's language and literacy. For example, children whose parents read to them at home recognize letters of the alphabet and write their names sooner.²⁹ Direct parent-teaching activities—such as showing children how to write words—are

linked to children's ability to identify letters and connect letters to speech sounds.³⁰ Mothers who use more complex sentences and a wider range of different words in their everyday conversations have children with richer expressive language and higher scores on literacy-related tasks in kindergarten.³¹ In addition, children of parents who emphasize problem solving and curiosity for learning develop long-term individual interests and the ability to attend to tasks for longer periods of time.³²

Families, however, differ in the extent to which they expose their children to language. In their seminal research, Hart and Risley (1995) found that children from professional families show significantly greater rates of vocabulary growth than children from welfare families and demonstrate richer forms of language use and interaction. They conclude that the achievement gap begins even before preschool, in the home environments of children from birth to age 3, and they recommend that poor parents receive the parenting supports that can promote the literacy development of their children.³³ In fact, responsibility for learning activities, such as reading to children, and providing complementary learning experiences, such as making library visits, going on trips to the zoo, having picnics and attend-

SUPPORTING HOME–SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

Chicago Child–Parent Centers (CPC) have been administered by the Chicago public schools since 1967 and funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. One of the programs cited most frequently by policymakers and researchers building the argument for universal pre-K, the CPC program provides preschool education for low-income children from age 3 through third grade, as well as a variety of family support services inside and outside the centers.

Although home visitation is provided, most family support activities are directed toward enhancing involvement in children's education at home and in school. Involvement may include a wide variety of activities, such as parents volunteering as classroom aides, interacting with other parents in the center's parent resource room, participating in educational workshops and courses, attending school events, accompanying classes on field trips, and attending parent–teacher meetings. This involvement strengthens parenting skills, vocational skills, and social supports.

Studies have indicated that CPC is effective in promoting both family and child development outcomes. Relative to a matched control group of children, CPC preschool participation was associated with greater parent involvement in and satisfaction with children's schooling and higher expectations for children's educational attainment.²⁷ Both preschool participation and preschool plus school-age participation were associated with greater school achievement and lower rates of school remediation services. Moreover, preschool participation was consistently associated with higher rates of high school completion and lower rates of official juvenile arrest for violent and nonviolent offenses.²⁸ www.aecf.org/publications/advocasey/spring2002/chicago.htm

ing and participating in sporting events, has the power to alter the influence of poverty on children's language and literacy development.³⁴

Responsibility for learning might be the family involvement process that is most important for young children's outcomes. Fantuzzo and his colleagues (2004) recently showed that practices associated with responsibility for learning (e.g., providing a place for educational activities, asking a child about school, reading to a child), above and beyond aspects of the home-school relationship, are related to children's motivation to learn, attention, task persistence, and receptive vocabulary and to fewer conduct problems.³⁵

IMPLICATIONS

This research brief began with the idea that family involvement in early education is connected to the concept of complementary learning. Complementary learning emphasizes the linkages—such as those among the home, early childhood setting, and school—that work toward consistent learning and developmental outcomes for children. In line with the concept of complementary learning, this review suggests several ways that policymakers,

practitioners, and researchers can advance the practice of family involvement and strengthen the linkages among early childhood programs, schools, community-based organizations, and families. These suggestions are based upon the three family involvement processes that are included in the review and have been shown to be effective by empirical research.

For policy

- *Invest in projects that increase the family involvement processes.* This review points to the importance of three family involvement processes for young children's outcomes. Early childhood initiatives can emphasize outreach to families and invest in projects that increase family involvement in children's learning and development. They can promote training and professional development efforts, including higher education and community partnerships, that demonstrate how early childhood and elementary school teachers can create multiple avenues for parent participation in their children's learning. For example, the Incredible Years program has developed training modules for parents as well as for parents and teachers together to promote both parenting and home-school relationships. (See text box.)

- *Support early childhood programs in the community.* Family involvement in the early years can have long-term effects for children, such that policymakers and local funders would be well-served to encourage family involvement in early childhood. The more a community recognizes the importance of what goes on in families during children's earliest years and the amount of support parents require, the more resources can get mobilized to accomplish it. Moreover, early childhood and elementary school settings can work together to promote opportunities for family involvement within the community. For example, the Raising a Reader program, originally a local initiative, has spread to libraries, child care centers, and visiting nurse programs nationally and internationally. (See text box on page 6.)

- *Advance best practices for family involvement in early childhood.* Early childhood programs that engage in best practices around family involvement regard family involvement as a continuous process and as a result, create smooth transitions for families and children. Policy can develop systems and mechanisms that ensure that these best practices are realized. For example, standards can be put into place to guarantee that early childhood teachers are well paid and trained so that they have the ability and time to invite parents' participation and the knowledge to provide parents with clear strategies for rich relationships with their children. Moreover, policy can mandate that employers in the community allow parents of young children time off from work to participate in their children's learning environments and transition activities.

- *Sponsor dialogue about research on family involvement in early childhood.* Several federal and state early childhood policy initiatives with research and evaluation components already exist. Policymakers and funders can bring together these researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to form communities of practice to discuss emerging research findings, specifically as they relate to families, as well as to address issues such as translating the learning about family involvement into curriculum, guidelines for practice, and usable evaluation tools at the program level. These communities of practice can also advance new direc-

PUTTING PARENTING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

The Incredible Years Program developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton applies research-proven parenting and teaching practices to strengthen young children's social competence and problem-solving abilities and reduce aggression at home and school. Incredible Years is a comprehensive program; it incorporates parenting components with teacher- and child-focused intervention strategies. Comprehensive programs like Incredible Years are likely to be the most effective strategy to promote positive child outcomes.¹³ Thus, the Incredible Years Program is presented in four distinct formats:

- Parenting group sessions that focus on basic parenting skills, parental communication and anger management, and promoting children's academic skills
- A teacher classroom management series
- Two-hour weekly small therapy sessions for children
- Classroom lesson plans that can be delivered one to three times a week for teachers

Incredible Years has been tested with 3- to 8-year-old children with conduct problems as well as with 2- to 6-year-old children who are at high risk by virtue of living in poverty. The child program promotes children's social competence and reduces conduct problems; the parent program helps parents strengthen parenting skills and become more involved in their children's school activities; and the teachers' program strengthens classroom management skills, reduces classroom aggression, and improves teachers' ability to focus on students' social, emotional, and academic competence.¹⁴

www.incredibleyears.com

tions for research. For example, research on family involvement in early childhood can begin to look more closely at how family involvement in early childhood and at points of transition, relates to children's outcomes over time. In addition, as more young children are born to ethnically and economically diverse families, research will begin to unpack what family involvement practices work, under what conditions, at what points in development, and for what groups.

For practice

- *Approach family involvement in multiple ways.* The three family involvement processes described in this brief are important for children's success. Therefore, early childhood practitioners can and should approach family involvement in overlapping and multiple ways. For example, early childhood practitioners can help promote warm and nurturing parenting through workshops, trainings, and parent-child groups. To develop home-school relationships, teachers can communicate with parents frequently about their young children's learning patterns and provide opportunities for parents to visit the classroom. Moreover, early childhood practitioners can help parents take responsibility for their children's learning outcomes by providing materials and ideas for activities that parents can do at home and in the community with their children.
- *Think about family involvement as a continuum.* Teachers must recognize that families often enter their classrooms with histories of parenting experience and memories of prior relationships with child care providers and early childhood educators. Teachers must actively reach out to and invite parents to share both their child's and their own experiences in a previous setting, as well as how they would like to be involved in the present. In particular, kindergarten teachers can actively reach out to early childhood programs in the community, while early childhood programs can form relationships with the elementary schools where children will be enrolled.
- *Create mechanisms for smooth transitions.* Families are often the most consistent context in children's lives and provide a natural link between the early childhood and elementary school learning environ-

PROMOTING READING IN THE HOME THROUGH FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

Family literacy programs today are widely recognized as one way to help parents take an active role in their children's literacy development. One new initiative, the **Early Authors Program**, promotes early bilingual literacy in preschool children by providing early childhood educators with an example of how children's literacy, identity, and self-esteem can be supported while respecting their families' funds of knowledge and home languages. Inspired by the work of Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy with school-age children, the Early Authors Program was developed, piloted, and evaluated in Miami-Dade County, Florida, by Judith Bernhard.

Family and center-based child care settings are provided with a digital camera, color printer, computer, and laminating equipment, and together children, parents, and educators author books in both English and the home languages of the children. The books are based on family histories, the children's lives, and the children's interests, and family photographs and children's drawings are used to illustrate the books. Through the program, parents have opportunities to talk with teachers and bring home new ideas, resources, and techniques for incorporating literacy into their everyday home activities. The program has been evaluated with 800 families using a pretest/posttest randomized experimental design. The intervention was effective in increasing literacy practices in child care centers and increasing language and literacy scores of 3 and 4 year olds.³⁶ www.ryerson.ca/~bernhard/early.html

ments. Early childhood practitioners must provide and sustain the kind of support and modeling needed to reduce stress for parents and give them clear strategies for positive interactions and relationships with their children. Pamphlets and flyers can offer useful information but are not enough. Parents need real opportunities to interact with providers. School administrators can also alleviate logistical obstacles to transition practices by generating class lists early, providing professional development to kindergarten teachers regarding the importance of transition, and creating opportunities for parents and early childhood professionals to visit kindergarten classrooms in the spring and summer.

- *Respect diversity.* This review also points to the diversity of families and family practices. Teachers must be aware of and sensitive to differences in home culture and practices while at the same time helping parents to understand the features of family involvement that are related to positive outcomes for children. Programs such as Early Authors build on parents' strengths and benefit children by giving parents a prominent role as their children's literacy teachers. (See text box.)
- *Partner with the community.* Early childhood and elementary school settings can work together to promote opportunities for

family involvement within the community. For example, classes and programs can take place in libraries, museums, zoos, and other community facilities. By connecting to resources in their communities early in their child's development, families can develop a broad network that can serve as a resource later in their child's life. For example, the Raising a Reader Program, which is often conducted in libraries, increases both the amount of time parents spend reading with their children and the number of visits parents and children make to the library. (See text box).

For research

- *Devote time to longitudinal studies that examine the impact of family involvement in early childhood over time.* More than ever, we now know that families make a difference in the lives of young children. It is important for researchers to continue to examine how family involvement in early childhood relates to children's outcomes both in the early years and over time. Research of this nature can go a long way in helping practitioners and policymakers bolster their arguments for well-funded, high-quality early childhood programs across the country. For example, over 30 years of research on the Chicago Child-Parent Centers has shown that children of

low-income parents who got involved in their children's education in the early years had higher rates of eighth grade reading achievement and high school completion.³⁷ (See text box on page 3.)

- *Trace the relationships between transition practices and child outcomes.* Studies can begin to associate how the relationships among early childhood programs, schools, and families at points of transition relate to children's outcomes both in kindergarten and later in their education. Researchers might consider outcomes for children beyond traditional measures like developmental scores. For example, positive transitions might result in lower rates of special education referrals. Research can also begin to identify the complex relationships between transition practice and child outcomes. It is possible that best transition practices increase parents' sense of connectedness to the elementary school and shift the tone away from formal contacts between teachers and the family. Consequently, parent-teacher relationships might become more focused on problem-solving and more collaborative, in turn creating better child outcomes.
- *Build a culturally responsive knowledge base.* The educational agenda for the 21st

century must account for the fact that a growing number of children entering U.S. schools are from ethnically and culturally diverse families. Research on family involvement can respond to these trends by respecting, responding to, and building on the culturally grounded resources of families. Research can develop from the "ground up" a more finely tuned understanding of what family involvement practices work, under what conditions, and for what groups. It is unclear how well many of the recommended strategies for parental involvement fit with the life rhythms and demand of non-White and poor families. Research can also test the utility and feasibility of the frequently proposed models of parent involvement.

- *Connect research to policy and practice.* Researchers can support policymakers and practitioners who are charged with developing programs and policy for young children and families grounded in evidence by translating complex research into quick and easy-to-read summaries. These research snapshots can reach the field through online networks, listservs, conferences and/or practitioner publications. Moreover, researchers might begin to develop a community of practice around

family involvement in early childhood to share findings and new ideas for how to translate well-designed research into practice.

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APPENDIX I: METHOD

This research brief examines the family involvement processes related to children's academic and social achievement. It synthesizes the research published over the last 6 years (1999–2005) catalogued in the Family Involvement Network of Educators bibliographic database (www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/bibliography). The FINE bibliographies compile family involvement research using the electronic databases ERIC, Education Abstracts, PsychINFO, SocioFILE, Current Contents, and Dissertation Abstracts. A combination of the keywords "parent," "family," "home," "teacher," and "school" were searched. The search was further refined to include specific terms such as "family school relationships," "parent teacher cooperation," "teacher training," and "family involvement." This review culled only articles from the FINE bibliographies that focused on family involvement as it relates to child outcomes.

The articles in this review were published in peer-reviewed journals. The majority of them used quantitative analyses on data yielded from sound research designs. Some qualitative studies that described the family involvement practices associated with children's school achievement were included, as were seminal articles and books published prior to 1999. All journal articles and books were summarized and coded for methodology, family involvement practices, and children's outcomes. In addition, evaluation reports of the four programs featured in this review were examined. These reports came from various sources including journals, the Internet, and unpublished manuscripts from HFRP's evaluation database. Altogether, 38 articles and reports were included in this review.

GOING TO SCALE: PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES THROUGH A FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

Raising a Reader is a nonprofit and supporting organization of Peninsula Community Foundation, a community association located in San Mateo, California. The Raising a Reader mission is to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding, and early literacy skills critical for school success by engaging parents in a routine of daily "book cuddling" with their children from birth through age 5. Raising a Reader is based on the premise that when parents establish a reading routine with their children, family bonding time increases, as do children's vocabulary and preliteracy skills.

Raising a Reader fosters a reading routine whereby children carry bright red bags filled with high-quality picture books into their homes each week. The books feature artwork, age-appropriate language, and multicultural themes. During Literacy Nights, parents are taught read-aloud strategies anchored to language development research and storytelling.

Raising a Reader has spread to libraries, child care centers, Head Start programs, teen mother programs, and home visiting nurse programs in 72 communities, 24 states, Mexico, Botswana, and Malaysia. Six independent evaluations show that Raising a Reader significantly improves family reading behavior and kindergarten readiness, especially for low-income, non-English speaking families. Raising a Reader has been shown to increase the amount of time parents spend reading with their children, the number of visits parents and children take to the library, and an increase in kindergarten readiness skills of book knowledge, story comprehension, and print knowledge.

www.pcf.org/raising_reader/research.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Preparation of this brief was made possible through the support of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. We would also like to thank Celina Chatman of the University of Chicago, Lei-Anne Ellis and Lauren Leikin of The Agenda for Children, Lisa Klein of Hestia Advising, Christine McWayne of New York University, and Holly Kreider, Ellen Mayer, Priscilla M.D. Little, and Abby Weiss of Harvard Family Research Project for their insightful review and feedback.

NOTES

- 1 Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974). Is early intervention effective? *Teachers College Record*, 76(2), 279–303.
- 2 For more information about complementary learning and HFRP's other projects, visit www.hfrp.org. To learn more about this series of publications, email fine@gse.harvard.edu. To be notified when future HFRP publications become available, subscribe to our e-news email at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/subscribe.html.
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MORE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT RESOURCES FROM HFRP

For more information and for resources to help you design, implement, and evaluate family involvement work, consider making use of the following resources:

Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement

The document contains Web links to research, information, programs, and tools from over 100 national organizations. It provides information about parenting practices to support children's learning and development, home-school relationships, parent leadership development, and collective engagement for school improvement and reform. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/guide/guide.html

The Family Involvement Storybook Corner

This section of the Harvard Family Research Project website is a unique source for information on using children's storybooks with family involvement themes to engage families in their children's education and encourage family-school-community partnerships, all while supporting literacy. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/storybook/index.html

Bibliography on Family Involvement in Early Childhood

This bibliography, compiled by the Harvard Family Research Project, highlights family involvement research literature related to early childhood. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/bibliography/ece.html

Evaluation Exchange: Evaluating Family Involvement Programs

This issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* addresses the challenges of evaluating family programs, such as the need for conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, accountability, and contextual responsiveness. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue28/index.html

Join the Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE)

Our Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) is a national network of over 5,000 people who are interested in promoting strong partnerships between children's educators, their families, and their communities. There is no cost to become a FINE member. Once you join, you will receive our monthly announcements via email of current ideas in family involvement and new resources added to the FINE website. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/joinfine.html

at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000026>

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Founded in 1983, HFRP's mission is to promote more effective educational practices, programs, and policies for disadvantaged children and youth by generating, publishing, and disseminating our and others' research. We believe that for all children to be successful from birth through adolescence there must be an array of learning supports around them. These supports, which must reach beyond the school, should be linked and work toward consistent learning and developmental outcomes for children. HFRP calls this network of supports *complementary learning*.



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Project PAPI Resources for working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Preschoolers and Families

Prepared by Martha Villegas-Gutiérrez, Ph.D. & Patti Blasco

Dec. 14, 2011

Families

Books:

Barrera, I., Corso, R.M. (2003). *Skilled dialogue: Strategies for responding to cultural diversity in early childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

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Working Together: Building Improved Communication

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"Working Together" is a collection of CADRE resources designed to support effective collaboration between parents, schools, and early childhood programs. Marshall Peter, Director of CADRE, gives a brief introduction to "Working Together: Building Improved Communication" in the following video.

Click on any Lego building block below to begin exploring these resources. We recommend viewing the "Listening" video first, "Understanding Positions & Interests" Video second, and then "A Tale of Two Conversations" (a two-part video from Pennsylvania's Office for Dispute Resolution). Those of you who would like more in-depth exploration of these skills can visit "[A Tale of Two Conversations Study Guide](#)".

Working Together:
 Building Improved
 Communication

Click on any Lego building block to begin exploring these resources.

THESE VIDEOS CAN BE USED BEFORE OR DURING: Informal Resolution Processes; IEP/IFSP Meetings; Resolution Meetings; Mediation Sessions; Staff Trainings; Pre-Service Training for Administrators and Teachers; Co-Populated Trainings with Parents and Educators; and, Training for Secondary Students with Disabilities.



Working Together: Building Improved Communication

"Working Together" is a collection of CADRE resources designed to support effective collaboration between parents, schools, and early childhood programs.

Encouraging Meaningful Parent/Educator Collaboration: A Recent Review of Literature This document synthesizes findings from a number of recent academic studies and policy publications. Among the highlights is the idea that involvement may be too narrow a term to encapsulate the range and depth of partnerships that support students' success.

Effective IEP Meetings: Tested Tips This brief document offers suggestions for convening successful IEP meetings. It includes preparation tips for parents and educators.

Resolution Meetings: A Guide for Parents - REVISED June 2008 This guide helps families to have a better understanding of Resolution Meetings. This is a joint Publication from CADRE and the ALLIANCE.

Facilitated IEP Meetings: An Emerging Practice This guide provides an introduction to IEP facilitation for parents and other family members to help orient them to this emerging practice. This document was published in November 2004. [More information on IDEA 2004.](#)

Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships This sourcebook was designed to identify and describe promising practices in family-community-school involvement occurring in pre-K-12 school environments across the country. The book includes guiding principles for family-school-community involvement, tips for getting started, a self-assessment tool to determine current practices, strategies, and program descriptions.

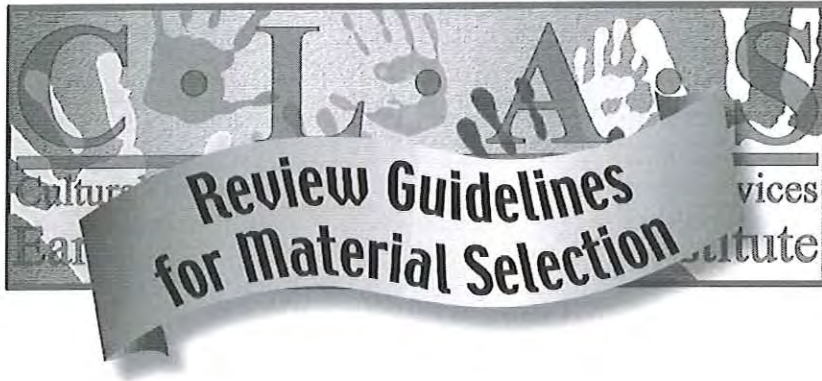
Steps to Success: Communicating with Your Child's School Offers specific communication skills that may be helpful to parents as they develop and maintain partnerships with their child's school. *A CADRE publication.* This document was published in May 2004. [More information on IDEA 2004.](#)

Parents and Educators Working Toward Mutual Solutions This is an online streaming video "Parents and Educators Working Toward Mutual Solutions" developed by the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) and Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE). This video was completed in November 2002. [More information on IDEA 2004.](#)

Families and Schools: Resolving Disputes through Mediation Many questions have been raised on exactly what mediation is and how it is done. This publication has been developed by the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) in partnership with the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) to respond to some of the questions that so many parents, teachers, administrators, and others have about mediation. Through the presentation of real life stories, the reader will gain a better understanding of the mediation process and its inherent flexibility. As different as these stories are, each ends with a successfully negotiated agreement making it possible for the children involved to get the services they need and the parents and schools to work together with renewed collaboration and partnership. *A CADRE Publication.* This document was published in July 2002. [More information on IDEA 2004.](#)

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Caregiver-Child Interaction

Caregiver-Child Interaction





Caregiver-Child Interaction

The following *Review Guidelines* are intended to help service providers and individuals involved in personnel preparation determine the congruence between the beliefs, values, and practices of the individuals in your community and current recommended practices in early childhood/special education. The *Review Guidelines* will first help you consider the overall effectiveness of presentation of a material. Next, questions follow which pertain specifically to the content area of **Caregiver-Child Interaction**.

It is important to realize that no material is likely to match the exact needs of individuals in your community. Therefore, in many instances, you may wish to make some simple adaptations to the materials before using them.

A separate set of *Review Guidelines* is available to help select materials that have been translated from one language to another. In addition, other suggestions for choosing materials are available on the CLAS Web site (<http://clas.uiuc.edu>). It is our hope that you may use these *Review Guidelines* to engage in meaningful dialogue with families and colleagues in your community, as you decide which materials to use in your early childhood setting.

Effectiveness of Presentation

Please respond to all that apply.

CLARITY

- (a) Is the purpose of the material clear?
- (b) Is the presentation of the information easy to follow?
- (c) If there are directions on how to use the material, are they clearly stated?
- (d) Does the material include an effective explanation of technical terms or jargon?

- (e) Does the language in the material acknowledge diversity (e.g., family structures, multi-generations, disabilities, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, etc.)?
- (f) Is the format (e.g., print, audio, video, etc.) appropriate for the intended users of this material?
- (g) Are contact agencies or persons for accessing additional information or support easily identifiable?

COMPREHENSION LEVEL

Easy = mainly simple sentences with minimal or no technical jargon;

Average = a mix of simple and complex sentences with some technical jargon (e.g., USA Today);

Difficult = mainly complex sentences with a lot of technical jargon or discipline-specific terms (e.g., College-level text or New York Times).

- (a) For printed materials, the reading level of the material is:
Easy | Average | Difficult | N/A
- (b) For video and audio materials, the comprehension level of the material is:
Easy | Average | Difficult | N/A

GRAPHICS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOS

Do the graphics:

- (a) Represent a non-stereotypical view of cultural (e.g., contemporary dress) and linguistic groups?
- (b) Represent a wide variety of groups (e.g., disabilities, gender, race, generation)?
- (c) Enhance the materials (e.g., photo prints and designs are appropriate and of high quality)?

1.

ESTABLISHING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROVIDERS AND FAMILIES

To what extent does the material ...

- (a) Emphasize the importance of providers and families establishing a comfortable relationship (e.g., understanding values and beliefs)?
- (b) Encourage the provision of services in the families' preferred language or through the assistance of a qualified translator/interpreter who can serve as a cultural mediator?
- (c) Provide guidance to the service providers and caregivers (e.g., parent, other members of the household, childcare providers) for sharing assumptions and expectations for service delivery?
- (d) Acknowledge the importance of employing service providers who respect and are knowledgeable about the cultures and languages of the families served?

2.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXTS

To what extent does the material ...

- (a) Suggest intervention strategies and materials that can be embedded within the family's routines and environments?
- (b) Suggest ways to obtain information and build on caregiver's beliefs about his or her own role in supporting the child's development?
- (c) Encourage service providers to incorporate the unique preferences and abilities of the caregivers and their child into the intervention?
- (d) Suggest ways to incorporate multiple important caregivers into the interaction?
- (e) Acknowledge the potential role or involvement of siblings in the intervention?

- (f) Respect the caregiver role by:
1. Emphasizing the caregiver's sense of competence in interacting with his/her child?
 2. Creating a low-risk, non-threatening environment that allows service providers to support caregiver-child interaction?
 3. Acknowledging the variety of roles and responsibilities the caregiver is comfortable assuming?
 4. Using games, songs, fingerplays, or rhymes familiar to the family's culture?

3.

MODEL EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent does the material ...

- (a) Identify potential short-term outcomes for both the caregiver and/or the child?
- (b) Identify potential long-term outcomes for both the caregiver and/or the child?
- (c) Specify the cultural and linguistic groups with whom the approach has been used?

4.

EVALUATING IMPACT AND APPROPRIATENESS OF INTERVENTION AND SERVICES

To what extent does the material ...

- (a) Encourage providers to systematically evaluate the appropriateness of the interventions with families based on their changing needs and preferences?
- (b) Suggest ways of ensuring that outcomes are important and meaningful to the families as well as the service providers?
- (c) Include a variety of options for gathering information from families (*e.g., interviews, observations, checklists, etc.*) that respect families' cultural and linguistic background and considers families' level of acculturation?

The following two questions are intended to deepen the analysis of the ways materials address issues of diversity. In some cases, these issues may have been addressed in the preceding questions.

5.

Does the material acknowledge and address complex and sometimes subtle aspects of diversity as they relate to caregiver-child interaction, such as:

- (a) Power (refers to the division of members of society into levels with unequal access to resources, knowledge, and authority)
- (b) Racism (refers to systems advantage based on race)
- (c) Prejudice (refers to an adverse judgment or opinion based on preconceived beliefs and ideas about different groups)
- (d) Socio-Economic Class (refers to the division of society into levels with unequal wealth and prestige)

6.

Are there any spoken or unspoken assumptions, values, or beliefs in this material that could conflict with the delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate services (e.g., assuming all parents view themselves as advocates or equal partners)?