

Module 3B: Session Handouts

Focusing on Families: The Importance of Family Engagement in High-Quality Early Childhood Programs

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Pre- and Post-Assessment

Module 3B: *Focusing on Families*

Date: _____

Trainer's Name: _____ Participant's Name: _____

Job Title: Teacher Assistant Teacher Director Other: _____
(circle one)

Ages you work with: infants toddler: ones toddler: twos preschool pre-k
(circle all that apply) 6 weeks to 12 months 13 to 23 months 24 to 35 months 3 to 4 years 4 to 5 years

Instructions: Think about the following statements in relation to what you understand BEFORE and AFTER the training. Please check the box that best describes how you would rate your level of knowledge and skills based on the training topic: 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

STATEMENTS	BEFORE THE TRAINING						AFTER THE TRAINING					
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Why it is important to be accepting and supportive of all family types and individual family needs												
Early childhood family engagement and its importance in high-quality early childhood programs												
The role of families in their children's development and learning												
The role of families in high-quality early childhood programs												
Strategies for encouraging family engagement, communicating with families, facilitating family meetings, and supporting families as they actively facilitate the development and learning of their children at home												

Exploring Family Relationships

Families that participate in my program include...

The families I work with are unique because...

I make families feel accepted by...

Families participate in my program by...

Making Families Feel Included

We can make families feel included by...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Parent Involvement vs. Family Engagement

Sorting Activity

PARENT INVOLVEMENT					FAMILY ENGAGEMENT				
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING									

Enter the number of each of the items below in one of the squares above in order from minimal parent involvement to high family engagement.

1. Families and staff work together to discuss, implement, and share responsibilities for a child’s early learning plan.
2. Families share suggestions and concerns with staff.
3. Parents talk to teachers at the time children arrive and when they leave at the end of the day.
4. Families volunteer for leadership activities and provide ongoing and meaningful input about programming.
5. Staff proved resources/ideas for families to use at home and in the community.
6. Parents participate in social events.
7. Families and staff share in the development activities and events over time based on their strengths, interests, and abilities.
8. Parents attend meetings.
9. Staff ask questions about the child, his or her family, and home life.
10. Families and staff work together to create activities that reflect the cultural traditions of the families of the program.

Example Intake Interview Questions

Source: Muhs, M. (2019). Family Engagement in early childhood settings. Readleaf Press.

1. Tell me about your family. Who lives in the family home? What is the language spoken most at home?
2. What are your most precious family traditions?
3. What are your family's practices around food or mealtimes? Do you usually eat family meals or do you eat on the run? Do you have any special dietary preferences or needs? What are your child(ren)'s favorite foods?
4. Tell me about your hopes for your child.
5. Tell me your expectations for your child.
6. Tell me about any fears you have for your child.
7. Do you have any non-developmental concerns about or for your child?
8. What would you like to see in your child's program?
9. Do you have any concerns or questions about your child's development? Does your child have any identified special needs?
10. Has your child traveled to locations outside our community? With family or to see family? Identify locations and length of time away.
11. Tell me about your child's typical day at home. What is your child's morning routine, schedule, evening routine, and bedtime?
12. What is your child's favorite activity to play alone?
13. What is your child's favorite activity to play with others (siblings, peers, neighbors, adults)?
14. Does your child have any specific fears?
15. Did your child attend another program previously? Tell me about your child's typical day at that program.
16. How do you prefer to receive information about your child's activities and experiences at our program?
17. What do you want to know most about your child's day?
18. Our program values your involvement. How would you like to be involved or engaged in the program? Do you have any concerns or limitations regarding family engagement, such as work commitments or transportation needs?

19. What are some skills, interests, talents, or hobbies that you might share with our program?
20. What are your feelings and preferences surrounding holidays, special dates, and birthdays? Are there any special holidays that your family celebrates or does not celebrate? Do you have any concerns about celebrations in general?
21. What special family activities or events do you do throughout the year (weekly, monthly, annually, around holidays, and so on)?
22. Parenting is a tough job. What additional information or support might you need or want to support you in this job?

Family Engagement Inventory

Refer to the course content and rate how often you complete the family engagement activities listed below. Then pick three areas to improve and list strategies for improvement and anticipated dates for completion in the Steps for Action section.

<i>Rating Scale: A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never ? = I need more information to rate this</i>	A	S	N	?
My program takes multiple steps to create positive first impressions.				
My program has several ways in which it learns about children and families and provides opportunities for families to learn about the program.				
My program uses multiple methods for communicating with families.				
My program shares children's learning in multiple ways.				
My program takes multiple steps to facilitate family participation.				
My program has systems in place for supporting children's learning at home.				

Steps for Action		
Area for Improvement:	Strategies for Completion:	Completion Date (1 month):
Area for Improvement:	Strategies for Completion:	Completion Date (3 months):
Area for Improvement:	Strategies for Completion:	Completion Date (6 months):



Deepening Families' Understanding of Children's Learning in Centers

Resources / Publications / Teaching Young Children / April/May 2017 / Deepening Families' Understanding of Children's Learning in Centers

FAYE DISMUKE, NICHOLE PARKS, JUDY JABLON

“When I drop my child off, I see some of her friends building block towers in one area of the classroom and playing grocery store in another. What’s the purpose of having different centers? And how do children learn if they play so much?” Many parents have questions like these, so we developed a family night event at our program to answer them. We invited parents and caregivers to participate in center activities to help them understand how play-based centers promote their children’s learning. We also followed up with families after the event and offered reinforcement materials. Our objective: to invite families to be partners in their children’s learning. Here’s how we did it.

Learning center observations

Laughter and conversation erupt as children and their families discuss structures in the block center, recipes in the dramatic play area, and sand flowing in the exploration station (sand and water table center). Playing beside the children, family members observe activities and write down children’s words and actions. Each center has a Work Sampling chart that lists brief summaries of the developmental guidelines—that is, performance indicators or expectations—for what children should be able to do in different curriculum areas (personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, etc.). This helps parents and teachers identify what children are learning. From time to time, adults compare what they observe in the centers to the guidelines on the chart.

After a while, a timer goes off, signaling cleanup time. The children continue to play while the adults go to a meeting room where the program director invites family members to share their observations. She leads a discussion using The Work Sampling System performance indicators and the “Recording and Understanding Children’s Learning” handout to identify the skills the children demonstrated. There are samples below that you could use to create your own handouts specific to your program.

This scenario from a family night first took place several years ago. The event continues today in Faye’s preschool program in Camden, Arkansas. It began when Faye and her staff responded to parents’ questions about the value of children’s play and concerns about their school readiness.

Faye talked directly with parents to hear their perspectives and found that they didn’t understand what kind of learning was happening as their children played. Faye recalls, “Prior to our event, parents commented that when they asked their children what they did at school that day, the children would say ‘Nothing’ or ‘Play.’ I knew the children were learning so much through play, and I wanted their parents to know, too! If families understand all that occurs in center activities and play, they will be able to support their children’s learning during play activities at home—to be learning partners with their children.”

Faye and her staff designed the learning center family night to give parents a chance to observe and take part in their children’s play-based learning. They hoped it would create a common language about learning between home and school and strengthen families’ confidence when extending learning at home.

<p>P4 Preschool-4 5th Edition</p> <p>The Work Sampling System is a comprehensive assessment system that provides a framework for observing and documenting children's learning and development.</p>	<p>Personal and Social Development</p> <p>A Self-Concept</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrates self-confidence. 2. Shows some self-direction. <p>B Self-Control</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follows simple classroom rules and routines. 2. Manages transitions. 	<p>C Approaches to Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner. 2. Attempts to talk and seek help when encountering a problem. 3. Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness. 	<p>D Interaction With Others</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interacts easily with one or more children. 2. Interacts easily with familiar adults. 3. Participates in the group life of the class. 4. Identifies some feelings and responds to those of others. 5. Begins to use simple strategies to resolve conflict. 	
	<p>Language and Literacy</p> <p>A Listening</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listens carefully by focusing. 2. Follows two- or three-step directions. <p>B Speaking</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues. 2. Follows rules for conversation. 3. Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes. 	<p>C Reading</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begins to develop knowledge of letters. 2. Demonstrates phonological awareness. 3. Shows appreciation and understanding of books and reading. 4. Reports some key ideas and details from text. 	<p>D Writing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Represents ideas and stories through pictures, drawings, and play. 2. Uses letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning. 3. Understands purpose for writing. 	
	<p>Language and Literacy for English Language Learners</p> <p>A Listening for English Language Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listens carefully by focusing. 2. Follows directions. <p>B Phonological Awareness for English Language Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develops awareness of the sounds of English. <p>C Speaking for English Language Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speaks in social situations. 			
	<p>Mathematical Thinking</p> <p>A Processes and Practices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begins to make sense of problems and use simple strategies to solve them. 2. Reasons qualitatively and begins to use some tools. 3. Uses words and representations to describe mathematical ideas. 4. Begins to recognize patterns and makes simple generalizations. <p>B Number</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Counts with understanding. 2. Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity. <p>C Operations and Algebraic Thinking</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understands and begins to apply addition and subtraction to problems. <p>D Measurement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compares, compares, and describes objects according to a single attribute. 2. Participates in measuring activities. 	<p>E Geometry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows understanding of and uses several positional words. 2. Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes. 3. Composes and decomposes shapes. 		

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Learning center family night

At 6:00 p.m., the classrooms are ready. Anticipating a large turnout of families and children, each room's seven centers are organized and inviting. As families enter their children's classrooms, teachers greet them and give out pencils and handouts on clipboards. One handout lists behaviors to look for in different areas of development as they observe children playing and doing activities. The other gives instructions and a table to record observations.

Learning centers: Blocks, art, dramatic play, exploration station (sand and water table), math manipulatives, writing center, and classroom library.

Handout 1. Work Sampling chart (see above): Handouts of the charts posted in each of the centers, listing performance indicators, or expectations, for what children should be able to do in different curriculum areas (personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, etc.).

Handout 2. Recording and Understanding Children's Learning (see below): The handout tells parents, "Observe your child working and playing. What do you notice your child *doing*? What materials is your child *using*? What do you hear your child *saying*? Jot down what you observe." It offers a table for recording observations by center and indicator.

Teachers move around the classroom while families and children work and play. They encourage parents to compare the notes they are taking to the charts. Teachers share examples with parents to help them get the hang of matching children's actions with specific performance indicators. In dramatic play, 4-year-old Samantha picks up a baby doll from the crib. She says to the friend she's playing with, "Brian, she's hungry. Put her in the high chair and feed her." Brian places the doll in a chair and offers it toy grapes. Looking at the list of expectations under the section Language and Literacy on the chart, Brian's dad connects his observation of Brian's play to the performance indicator about following two-step directions and, under Personal and Social Development, interacting easily with one or more children.

Families' observations

Block center. Taylor works on a structure he began earlier that day. He and his teacher had labeled the building "Children's Museum." Taylor's mom asks about the sign, and Taylor explains, "Ms. Jeanne and I made that sign this morning. It says Children's Museum. We took a trip there, remember?" As Taylor continues to build, his mom asks, "What are you making now?" Taylor

replies, “The staircase. Remember when we saw it?” Taylor’s mom writes, *Taylor’s making a staircase for the Children’s Museum.* She double-checks her Work Sampling chart, skimming the Language and Literacy section, and adds notes to Handout 2:

- Using expanded vocabulary—*staircase* and *children’s museum*
- Representing ideas through play—making a staircase with blocks
- Understands purposes for writing—asked his teacher to help make a sign



Exploration station (sand and water table). Darius’s mom joins her son and his friend as they pour sand through funnels. She writes down, *Using funnels to transfer sand.* The boys talk about how fast the sand flows. They count their scoops. She compares her notes to the Work Sampling chart. She sees that, along with science skills, Darius uses language and literacy and math skills while playing:

- Speaking clearly
- Using vocabulary
- Counting
- Exploring how objects and materials move

Debriefing

After 30 minutes of play and observation, it’s time to debrief. Faye and the staff know the importance of giving parents time to come together to discuss their observations, share “aha” moments, and ask questions. Parents refer to the handouts as they describe the connections they made between their observations and children’s learning. They have lively discussions and compare notes and findings; more laughter is heard. Faye and the staff encourage families to notice that children’s learning in each center addresses many different subject areas. Later that week, the handouts and examples from the discussion are shared with families through the program newsletter.

Conclusion

For several months after this year’s family night, we continued to receive positive feedback from families about their experiences with learning center observations. Faye periodically sends out a form asking families to share anecdotal notes from conversations with their children about their play experiences at home. She notices that parents are having more in-depth conversations with their children and are beginning to understand and appreciate the learning that occurs through play. Families have become true learning partners with the preschool staff and with their children.

Sample Handout 2: Recording and Understanding Children's Learning

In the _____ center ...	We observed children (doing, using, saying) ...	Children are learning to ...
Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying <i>rectangle, square, unit, cylinder</i> • Solving problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words and representations to describe mathematical ideas (math) • Ask questions and solve problems that arise during explorations (science)
Exploration station (sand and water)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying <i>funnel, fast, slow, scoop, more, less</i> • Scooping and pouring sand • Taking turns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use expanded vocabulary (language and literacy) • Use eye–hand coordination (physical development) • Interact with peers (personal and social development)
Exploration station (sand and water)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying <i>funnel, fast, slow, scoop, more, less</i> • Scooping and pouring sand • Taking turns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use expanded vocabulary (language and literacy) • Use eye–hand coordination (physical development) • Interact with peers (personal and social development)
Dramatic play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing their parts in the story (“I’ll be the cashier, you be the waiter”) • Setting up a restaurant and putting menus on the table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use expanded vocabulary (language and literacy) • Represent ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play (language and literacy) • Identify people’s jobs and what is needed to perform them (social studies)

<p>Art</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making collages • Choosing materials and solving problems • Saying <i>glue, markers, felt, pom-poms</i> • Adding letters, words, and their names to their drawings and collages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of art materials for tactile experience and exploration (the arts) • Represent ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play (language and literacy) • Use letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning (language and literacy) • Understand purposes of writing (language and literacy)
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The performance indicators in the third column are adapted from The Work Sampling System: Preschool–4 Developmental Guidelines. Copyright © 2013 NCS Pearson, Inc. All rights reserved. Portions of this work were published in previous editions.

Sample Anecdotal Note From a Parent



At our house, I've gathered materials and created a space where Jaycee can make art. I started displaying her pictures and writing down what she says about them. I'm looking around for more materials, like recycled paper, ribbons, and packaging, that Jaycee can use in her artwork.

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Photos courtesy of Shaun Johnsen

Audience: Teacher

Age: Preschool

Topics: Curriculum, Assessment, Classroom Management, Assessment, Observation, Curriculum Development, Other Topics, Family Engagement, Family Engagement, Play, Centers, TYC

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<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/apr2017/deepening-families-understanding>

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