



# The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework:

Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children

Developed by: The Maryland Family Engagement Coalition



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## Introduction

Family engagement is a critical component of high-quality early care and education. When done well, family engagement practices can support the healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of young children, regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic background.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, families—particularly those with limited income—benefit from family engagement practices when early care and education providers link them to support in times of need, help build their peer networks, increase their understanding of child development, and provide classes and training to enhance parenting practices and improve job skills.

At the same time, research has documented the negative impact of socioeconomic and demographic variables like poverty and low levels of parental education on school readiness outcomes.<sup>3</sup> No less impactful are the more immediate family and household conditions that can negatively affect school readiness like maternal depression; child hunger; abuse and neglect; and family instability caused by divorce, military deployment, and any termination in relationships or change in family dynamics. Although often correlated with poverty, these proximate factors can either directly impact school readiness or give rise to other conditions—like behavioral problems—that then affect a child’s ability to meet key developmental and learning milestones.

Given the importance of family engagement in promoting positive outcomes for children, and given the negative school readiness outcomes that can result from certain socioeconomic conditions, it is imperative that Maryland’s early childhood community works not only to promote family engagement in early care and education settings, but also to improve a child’s home environment when necessary. Equally important, it is critical that the state lead a coordinated effort to support early care and education providers as they implement family engagement strategies that promote both child and family well-being.

Maryland early childhood stakeholders have developed innovative strategies to support vulnerable families, providing opportunities for parents to develop their parenting skills, learn about child development, and become more socially and financially self-sufficient. Currently, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) fully funds 16 Family Support Centers as part of the [Maryland Family Network](#), [27 Judy Center Partnerships](#), and a statewide network of [family support services](#) for children with disabilities. [Home visiting](#) programs in every jurisdiction—supported by MSDE and the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Human Resources—work with thousands of families each year, focused on parent–child health and wellness. These programs work in combination with the state’s 19 federally funded [Head Start grantees](#) to provide a wide array of community supports for families of young children. In addition, federal and state funding is often combined to support families in Maryland. This has occurred, for example, when state-funded Judy Center Partnerships supplemented federal Head Start and Early Head Start programs to increase the hours and days of program operation.

This Framework builds on Maryland’s commitment to supporting young children and their families by outlining goals and strategies to support family engagement initiatives implemented by early care and education providers.

## PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Maryland’s *Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* is designed to support intentional thinking and action regarding the implementation of family engagement policies and practices both at the state level and among early care and education providers who serve young children, including children from poor families, children with disabilities and special health needs, and dual language learners. The Framework should be used to assess current family engagement activities and promote policies and practices that

<sup>2</sup>See Christenson, S.L. (2000). Families and schools: Rights, responsibilities, resources, and relationships. In R.C. Pianta & M.J. Cox (Eds.), *The transition to kindergarten* (pp.143–177). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. and McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H.L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(3), 363–377.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Duncan, G.J. and Brooks-Gunn, J. (1997). *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation and Yeung, W. J., Linver, M. R., Brooks-Gunn, J. (2002). How money matters for young children’s development: Parental investment and family processes. *Child Development*, 73(6),1861–79.

support families. More specifically, the purpose of this document is to:

1. Recognize the importance of family engagement as a core component of early care and education;
2. Put forth a set of common goals for family engagement across the early childhood system and within individual early care and education providers; and
3. Offer family engagement strategies for early care and education providers and identify resources that support the implementation of those strategies.

It is important to note that a number of community organizations in addition to early care and education providers offer family engagement initiatives in Maryland. Although this document is written with early care and education providers in mind, museums, public libraries, medical offices, hospitals, community colleges, and other community organizations work on a daily basis to support the goals outlined in this Framework. Examples of the work from these organizations are also highlighted here.

### DEVELOPING THE MARYLAND FRAMEWORK

Maryland's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant provides an opportunity to coordinate the state's early childhood family engagement practices and identify a common set of goals for the state's family engagement initiatives. At the federal level, the *Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*, published by the Office of Head Start, and the draft of the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) family engagement framework contain organizational structures that can be adapted and used for this purpose. Maryland's vision for family engagement is informed by both of these federal resources.

Maryland's *Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework*, while informed by both federal resources, utilizes the overall structure of the *Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework* published by the Office of Head Start. The Maryland Framework adopts the Head Start outcomes (referred to as goals in this document) with goal definitions and strategies tailored for the state. The strategies contained within this Framework are organized into "program foundations" and

"program impact areas"—categories similar to the Head Start Framework. It is important to note that not all strategies in the Maryland Framework will be applicable for every early care and education provider, and the strategies are not additional program requirements, but rather guidelines for helpful practices.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Prior to the development of the Maryland Framework, the Coalition agreed on a number of core principles that guided the work. These guiding principles are:

- Positive, respectful, and empathetic relationships between providers and parents are the foundation for successful family engagement strategies.
- Family engagement strategies must be appropriately resourced and designed to meet the specific needs and constraints of Maryland's low-income population. From the parental perspective, the stresses associated with economic hardship, language and cultural barriers, raising a child with disabilities, and inflexible work hours, among other factors, can make family engagement difficult. From the provider perspective, the demands that accompany being a small business or a federal or state grantee can also make the implementation of family engagement strategies difficult.
- Family engagement practices operate within a larger state system and can be enhanced or inhibited by other early childhood policies. Current and proposed state-level early childhood policies should be evaluated for their potential impact on the family engagement goals articulated in this document.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE DOCUMENT

Maryland's *Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* is organized in a way that best supports the document's overall goals of: (1) recognizing the importance of family engagement as a core component of early care and education; (2) setting forth common goals for family engagement efforts; and (3) summarizing effective family engagement strategies and resources. The first substantive section of the document defines "family engagement" in early childhood. This definition, adopted by the Maryland Family Engagement Coalition,



combines a number of different family engagement definitions in order to capture the unique thinking of the group.

After defining family engagement, the Framework presents a set of common goals for family engagement practices that are derived from the *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*. The final section of the document offers a set of general strategies that early care and education providers can use to meet each of the goals. Like the Head Start Framework, these goals are organized around the key program foundational areas of leadership and professional development, as well as the program impact areas of program environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning, and community partnerships.

In addition to these sections, the document contains “call out boxes” that highlight examples of successful family engagement strategies in Maryland, as well as three appendices with additional information. Appendix A contains a crosswalk of the outcomes included in the U.S. Department of Education’s Framework with the *Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework*. Appendix B provides national and state resources that can be used by early care and education providers to implement the strategies that support the goals contained in the document. Appendix C provides definitions of key terms used in the Maryland Framework.

## **Maryland’s Definition of Family Engagement**

The first step in uniting Maryland’s early childhood community around a common set of family engagement goals and

strategies was for Coalition members to agree on a definition of family engagement for the state. After consulting a number of definitions from well-known organizations in the field, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children; the Office of Head Start, the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Workgroup; and the Harvard Family Research Project, the Coalition constructed a hybrid definition from these existing definitions that best captures the state’s vision. The definition is:

*Family engagement is a shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities for student learning and achievement; it is continuous from birth into the school-age years; and it occurs across the various early care and learning settings where children are. Family engagement means building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent–child relationships, and the ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike. It reflects culturally competent and universal design approaches, encompassing the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and activities of all families, as well as early care settings that support all children’s positive development. Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood settings, school, and community. Sustainable family engagement operates with adequate resources, including public–private partnerships, to ensure meaningful and effective strategies that have the power to impact student learning and achievement.*

# THE MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



*The Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* puts forth a set of common goals for family engagement to be used across the Maryland early childhood system and within individual early care and education programs. These goals are realized by implementing family engagement strategies that focus on foundational areas like leadership and professional development as well as strategies that focus on the "points of impact" in early care and education settings. The successful implementation of the strategies promotes positive school readiness outcomes.

## The Framework

### GOALS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement practices must be initiated and implemented with clear goals in mind. Below are the seven goals that state family engagement initiatives and the family engagement practices of early care and education providers should target. These goals are consistent with Maryland's definition of family engagement and operationalize the vision articulated by the definition. As both the state and early care and education providers work to support families with young children, they should do so with these specific goals in mind.

#### **Goal 1: Family engagement initiatives should promote family well-being.**

Maryland's vision for family engagement is a two-generation strategy. Families are the key to a child's early development and learning. As such, a goal of family engagement initiatives must be to support family well-being. Maryland's

family engagement initiatives and the family engagement practices of early care and education providers should promote the safety, health, and financial security of families so that they can successfully parent their young children.

#### **Goal 2: Family engagement initiatives should promote positive parent-child relationships.**

Research clearly documents the link between competent parenting, strong parent-child bonds, and positive school readiness outcomes. Given the importance of parent-child relationships, it is imperative that Maryland's family engagement initiatives and the practices of early care and education providers have the goal, beginning with the transition to parenthood, of supporting parents and families in developing warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development. This begins with developing warm, nurturing relationships among adults, including between staff members, and between staff and parents and other adult family members.



**Goal 3: Family engagement initiatives should support families as lifelong educators of their children.**

Parents and family members are their child’s first teachers. Maryland initiatives and the practices of early care and education providers should create collaborative relationships with a variety of service entities to support and empower the family in its role as first teacher.

**Goal 4: Family engagement initiatives should support the educational aspirations of parents and families.**

Research has documented the link between parental education—particularly maternal education levels—and positive school readiness outcomes. When parents and other adults in the family strive to achieve their educational goals, they become a positive example to their children regarding the importance of education. Therefore, a goal of Maryland initiatives and the practices of early care and education providers should be to support parents and families to advance their own interests through education, training, and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

**Goal 5: Family engagement initiatives should support families through the care and education transitions of early childhood.**

When a child transitions to a new early care and education provider, or to the formal education system, the child and family changes setting, teacher, and learning culture. These transitions are challenging for parents and families—and often for providers and teachers—to navigate. Therefore, Maryland initiatives and the practices of early care and education providers should support families as they make transitions with their children to new learning environments.

**Goal 6: Family engagement initiatives should connect families to their peers and to the community.**

Personal networks are a key source of support for families with young children. Learning from one another and sharing common experiences can inform parents and families

about resources, expand parenting strategies, and offer a source of comfort. Maryland initiatives and the family engagement practices of early care and education providers should support parents and families to form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and that enhance social well-being and community life.

**Goal 7: Family engagement initiatives should support the development of families as leaders and child advocates.**

When parents and families are empowered, they can be a strong force for positive change in their child’s education and in many other areas of life. Therefore, Maryland initiatives and the family engagement practices of early care and education providers should support families to participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, and community and state organizing activities to improve children’s development and learning experiences.

**PROGRAM/PROVIDER STRATEGIES TO MEET THE GOALS**

The goals outlined above summarize the areas that family engagement initiatives at both the state and provider level should address. In this section, strategies are provided that can be used by early care and education providers to meet the goals. These strategies are organized in a similar way to the *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*. Strategies are offered to support the *foundational* areas of a program, which include leadership and professional development. In addition, strategies are also offered to support family engagement initiatives at the program or provider’s “*point of impact*.” These impact areas include program environment, teaching and learning, family partnerships, and community partnerships. A wide variety of strategies are offered that are applicable in multiple settings, including family child care, center-based child care, nursery schools, public prekindergarten programs, and Head Start programs.

## Foundational Area: Program Leadership

- Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, provider environment, and partnerships related to supporting family well-being and positive parent–child relationships.
- Develop relationships with community members and community organizations that support families’ interests and needs.
- Ensure staff members have appropriate training and effective supervision to support families and their relationships with their infants, toddlers, and preschool age children.
- Establish a reciprocal relationship with early intervention services and school systems to support and empower families in their continued role as their child’s lifelong educators.
- Form agreements with education entities and organizations that support staff and families’ education and training goals.
- Ensure that parents’ opinions are heard and included in the program planning processes (e.g., policy council and parent committees).

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: MARYLAND’S FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER NETWORK

Like two-generational approaches around the country, Maryland’s Family Support Center (FSC) network is designed to strengthen families, linking family economic success strategies for parents with high quality early care and education for children. By their very nature Family Support Centers are of, by, and for both parents and children, all day, every day and **promote the well-being of the whole family** (Goal 1).

Parents and children come to a Family Support Center together because of the program’s goal to foster and **promote positive parent-child relationships** (Goal 2). Children, ages birth to four, are cared for on site in a high quality early education program and/or through home-based services. The focus is on effective teaching, building trusting relationships between adults and children and among the adult staff and participants, and offering integrated, comprehensive services and supports for children, parents, and families, including health, nutrition, and mental health. The activities are designed to **support families through the care and education transitions of early childhood** (Goal 5) and **prepare families to be lifelong educators of their children** (Goal 3).

**Parents’ and families’ educational aspirations are supported** (Goal 4) with a “whatever it takes” approach, through training, education (e.g., ABE, GED, External Diploma, Alternative High School, ESOL), and job assistance that lead to work. FSCs link parents to public benefits and work supports and may offer financial coaching, education and access to financial products and services.

Underpinning all services at Maryland’s FSCs are strategies that engage mothers and fathers both as parents and workers by increasing their confidence, competencies, and resilience as individuals. FSCs support parents in their role as their child’s best advocate in ways that build self-efficacy and empower parents through parenting education and health education. Developing parents as leaders through a number of strategies, including the Parent Leadership Institute, **supports the development of families as leaders and child advocates** (Goal 7). Helping adults in the family establish or enhance their social networks of support as parents and workers, **connecting families to peers and to the community** (Goal 6), is a goal of the FSCs reflected in the design of the program.

With Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge funding, FSCs are adding services that provide training and technical assistance to child care providers in the community and smooth transitions for all children in the neighborhood, birth to five, to and from early care and education settings (Goal 5): elementary schools, private center- or home-based child care, family support, home visiting, or other family-chosen options.

**For more information, see:** <http://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org>

## Foundational Area: Professional Development

- Develop knowledge of relationship building that is grounded in cross-cultural responsiveness and strengths-based perspectives.
- Reflect on daily practice and personal experience to increase self-awareness and effective relationship-building with families.

- Develop knowledge of professional ethics in the areas of confidentiality, boundaries, and self-determination.
- Develop skill in coordination and collaboration with community partners.
- Gain knowledge about: the needs of prenatal and postnatal women and their families; child development and parenting practices; family financial literacy and financial

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN THE STATE'S JUDY CENTERS

A unique aspect of Maryland's early care and education system is the presence of Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers. Known as "Judy Centers," these entities are located at or near Title I schools, and provide access to high quality early childhood education programs, as well as comprehensive family support services. Judy Centers serve families with children birth through five years of age and typically services are available 7 to 12 hours a day, year round. The goal is school readiness.

Judy Centers are unique because they promote school readiness through collaboration with community-based agencies, organizations, and businesses. This integrated approach promotes program and service delivery that is conveniently located under one roof at or near the schools, ensuring that young children who may begin school at a deficit are given opportunities to start their formal education on a level playing field with their peers. The focus on **family well-being** (Goal 1) and an **Adult Education Component** (Goal 4) are key aspects of the Judy Center model.

Judy Centers must meet 12 Component Standards that are deemed essential to children's school readiness. Component V is Family Involvement. The Judy Center's role in family involvement is centered on the family's ability to participate in and support their child's early learning. Supporting **positive parent-child relationships** (Goal 2), **families as lifelong educators** (Goal 3), and **family engagement in transitions** (Goal 5) is accomplished through a host of different activities that may include Parent Cafes, programs for dads and other significant men in the lives of children, playgroups, puppet and children's theaters, story time, and family field trips. Activities and events are focused on the 7 domains of learning that are used to assess school readiness when children enter kindergarten. Family activities provide social networking opportunities that **connect parents and caregivers to their peers and community** (Goal 6) and **support family empowerment and child advocacy** (Goal 7) through event planning, volunteer opportunities, and membership on Judy Center Partnership Steering Committees. The family engagement services provided at a Judy Center depend on the collaboration of all the partners and the specific needs of the children and families. Judy Center staff communicates on an ongoing basis with parents through face-to-face contact, home visiting, regularly published newsletters that include calendars of events, flyers and brochures that include information about their programs and services, and many have websites.

There are currently 27 Judy Centers and three satellites located throughout Maryland. Through the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant, two Judy Center satellite sites were established at Carmody Hills Elementary School in Prince George's County and at the DRU Judy Center located at The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School in Baltimore City. A satellite is an extension of an existing Judy Center. The partnerships formed by the existing Judy Center serve the satellite catchment area and the same Coordinator typically serves both sites.

For more information on Judy Centers, see: [http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/early\\_learning/Judy.htm](http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/divisions/child_care/early_learning/Judy.htm)

stability; parenting a child with a disability; engaging fathers; how mental health and wellness affects families; trauma and its effect on relationships; communication styles; and relationship building.

- Include teachers/teacher assistants in parenting education sessions so

parents and teachers can share information about child development and program curriculum.

- Create "learning communities" for staff.
- Develop staff skills to support families to meet their learning goals.

- Develop knowledge about different kinds of education and training opportunities available to families.
- Prepare staff to engage parents in appropriate ways at all times.
- Conduct joint transition trainings across provider and local educational agencies.
- Gain understanding about the operations of early intervention services, public schools and the child care provider community and acknowledge the constraints and opportunities in building local partnerships (differences in policy, regulations, budgets, organizational design, etc.).
- Conduct staff training about how to encourage parent leadership and advocacy and facilitate activities that help parents and families enhance parent-child relationships; strengthen their role as educators; reflect and set learning goals; and prepare for transitions.
- Create safe and respectful environments where adults—staff and parents—can learn from each other and ask for the kinds of information that they find helpful as individuals and members of a group.
- Provide space and resources for monthly events chaired by parents, for parents.
- Provide training on multicultural principles, leadership development, and advocacy for staff and families.

## Impact Area: Program Environment

- Welcome all families—and all family structures, sizes, and arrangements.
- Initiate relationships with families that are receptive, responsive, and respectful.
- Include family-friendly spaces with pictures and materials that affirm, welcome and accept all families.
- Engage in honest dialogue with families about their expectations and staff/program objectives.
- Hold the child and family in high regard and partner effectively with all parents.
- Provide opportunities that support parents' needs to connect with other parents for reflection, information, ideas, and support.
- Support parent–child relationships in a way that values the culture and language of the family and recognizes how cultural influences impact family development.
- Welcome families to observe and participate in their child's classroom or home-based activities.
- Support and encourage parents to share tips on everyday learning practices with staff and other families.
- Make information available that supports adults' personal growth and career development.

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: REACH OUT AND READ

*Reach Out and Read* prepares children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to give out books and encourage families to read together. This program **connects families to their communities** (Goal 6) by building on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to support essential early literacy skills in young children. During regular pediatric well checkups, Reach Out and Read pediatricians and family physicians give new, developmentally appropriate books to children aged 6 months to five years and advise parents about the importance of reading aloud. Shared book reading represents a unique opportunity for parents and children to spend time together and Reach Out and Read helps parents use this time to **build positive parent–child relationships** (Goal 2). In addition, the program supports parents in their role as **lifelong educators of their children** (Goal 3) by helping parents to foster their children's emergent literacy skills.

Medical providers implementing the Reach Out and Read program work with families to prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to read, learn, and succeed. As a result of this evidence-based intervention, parents learn new ways to stimulate their children's literacy development, have more books in their home, and read more to their children. Research shows that children served by Reach Out and Read benefit greatly from their experiences sharing books with their families and through this program, acquire important skills that help build the foundations of success in kindergarten and beyond.

Reach Out and Read is available for use statewide and is currently being implemented by providers in half of the counties in Maryland. Prior to the implementation of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant, 45 providers were using the system. In just the first year of the Race to Top—Early Learning Challenge grant, the program has been made available to 20,000 additional children, with a goal of expanding to cover a total of 75,000 additional children by the end of the five-year grant period.

For more information, see: <http://www.reachoutandread.org/about-us/mission-and-model/>

- Ensure that parent meetings and trainings are announced routinely, that announcements are inviting, and that language is not a barrier to parent participation.
- Provide opportunities for families to connect with other families in the program or community who have similar personal or professional goals.
- Welcome and engage families as partners in transition planning.
- Help families identify and understand quality criteria in early childhood settings as children make transitions from prenatal to postnatal

services, new service options, new classrooms, or new home visitors.

- Create an environment that welcomes and affirms parent leadership and advocacy in the program.
- Work with parents to arrive at agreed upon understandings of how to partner and how to collaborate with each other within the program.

## Impact Area: Family Partnerships

- Help families identify their interests, articulate their strengths and needs, and accomplish and/or develop goals.

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: LEARNING PARTIES

One effective family engagement initiative implemented in Maryland is *Learning Parties*, created by Maryland Ready At Five. Guided by a trained professional, the interactive, hands-on, parent–child “parties” promote **positive parent–child relationships** (Goal 2). Based on the belief that **parents are lifelong educators of their children** (Goal 3), Learning Parties teach parents how to make everyday moments learning moments through playing, singing, talking, reading, and engaging in fun, learning activities. Learning Parties also **connect families to their peers and community** (Goal 6) by cultivating social networks and enabling parents to meet, talk with, and learn from other parents/families. Often, Learning Parties are held in schools and bring preschool children and their families into a school environment prior to being enrolled. As such, they support the goal of **family engagement in transitions** (Goal 5) as well.

Ready At Five has developed a Learning Party Curriculum in six key Domains: *Language & Literacy*, *Mathematical Thinking*, *Scientific Thinking*, *Social & Emotional Development*, *Physical Development (Play)*, and *The Arts*. Additionally, the Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Enrichment Through Stories (VIOLETS) curriculum, also developed by Ready At Five, has a Learning Party component, and is often offered to children and their parents/families at programs implementing the VIOLETS Read Aloud Program.

The Learning Party series for each domain includes curriculum for four 90-minute Learning Parties (for a total of 24 across all domains) during which parents learn a variety of techniques and strategies for improving the skills and abilities of their children while children participate in activities on the same themes as their parents. At the Learning Party, parents have an opportunity to practice the activities with their child while trained Learning Party leaders provide positive feedback and constructive suggestions. Parents are also given a homework assignment, as well as a variety of books, developmentally appropriate materials, and educational toys to start an early learning library in their home.

Learning Parties have been offered to hundreds of parents and children at no cost to them throughout Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions.

For more information, see: <http://www.readyatfive.org/raf/programs/learning-parties.html>

- Use goal-oriented home visits to establish relationships with families and to identify and support their interests and needs.
- Assist families in using resources and systems of support as necessary and appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for parents to learn about expectant parenting and prenatal health, the developing role of young parents (for adolescent parents), and/or about their roles as new mothers and fathers.
- Foster meaningful, reciprocal relationships between mother and child and father and child in a manner that is both culturally receptive and responsive.
- Help families identify appropriate practices that complement the stages of their developing child.
- Help parents and families ensure the health and safety of their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Support a father’s efforts to connect with and be responsible for his child at all ages and stages of development.
- Support families as they seek support from mental health consultants or other community agencies when there are parent–child relationship challenges that require additional services.
- Foster strong co-parenting relationships as appropriate.
- Assist families to develop their own education and training goals and provide referrals to educational resources (GED, adult education, ESL, employment opportunities, workplace literacy, parenting skills, job training, job preparation skills, etc.) to link families to the necessary supports to further their education/training.
- Invite past program parents and community volunteers to share their educational and career experiences with families.
- Invite families to volunteer or apply for jobs in the program that support their parenting, career or life goals. Support parents’ interests and goals by referring them to volunteer opportunities in the program and community.
- Help families develop transition plans for themselves and their children.

- Make sure that families are aware of services and know about their rights under federal and state laws, including their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Facilitate or refer parents to parental support and/or educational groups where they can share their concerns (e.g., children’s special needs, divorce, a death in the family).
- Talk with parents about their formal and informal social networks (family, neighbor, school, recreation, etc.) and explore interests or needs in forming new or renewing old social connections.
- Individualize opportunities for peer-to-peer connections for different groups of parents (e.g., fathers or grandparents).
- Provide opportunities for parents to identify their strengths as leaders/advocates and to use them in the program and community.
- Share information with families about existing parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks and/or parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to foster continuity in leadership and advocacy roles.
- Provide mentoring opportunities for parents that could include staff, alumni parents/families, elders, and professionals in the community to serve as a resource and support for parent leadership development.

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: EVERY CHILD READY TO READ @ YOUR LIBRARY

Public libraries in Maryland implement a number of strategies designed to meet the goals of the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework. A signature initiative of the public libraries is **Every Child Ready to Read @ your library**, a research-based early literacy outreach education program for parents and caregivers. The program enlists parents and caregivers as partners in preparing young children to read and provides them with effective tools and strategies, thus **supporting families as lifelong educators of their children** (Goal 3). The program also puts library resources into the hands of parents, **connecting families to their communities** (Goal 6). Every Child Ready to Read @ your library supports families in engaging in meaningful learning activities that provide a unique context for **promoting positive parent–child relationships** (Goal 2).

Through a series of workshops, parents and caregivers learn strategies for developing emergent literacy skills through engaging parent–child activities that incorporate singing, talking, reading, writing, and playing. These practices are all familiar to parents and caregivers, which makes them easy to use and integrate into everyday life. Through the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library program, families gain access to knowledge, resources, and community supports that help them engage in positive parent–child interactions and foster their young children’s emergent literacy skills.

Through the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant, every library system in Maryland received a copy of the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library toolkit. Library staff are being trained on the program and parents and providers are encouraged to talk with their local librarian about how their library is making use of the resources that Every Child Ready to Read @ your library provides.

**For more information on the national program, see: <http://everychildreadytoread.org/>**

- Partner with parents to engage advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family, and community needs or on other issues of interest to parents.
- Form partnerships with parent-to-parent organizations to facilitate connections for families.
- Work with families to help children overcome behavioral challenges.
- Consistently gather child information from families and ask parents about their observations of their child to inform teaching.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to participate in training opportunities regarding social and emotional development, e.g., Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning.
- Exchange information with parents about their children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development, and talk about the importance of the home language (with families

### Impact Area: Teaching and Learning

- Approach parents as equal partners in learning about their child while acknowledging parents’ premier role as their child’s first teacher.
- Talk with families about their child’s behavior and help them understand and respond appropriately to their child’s behavior.

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: MARYLAND'S HEAD START PROGRAMS

One of the defining features of *Head Start* is a strong emphasis on family engagement. Indeed, the *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework* served as a model for the development of the Maryland Family Engagement Framework. As such, Head Start programs in Maryland are designed to meet all of the goals of family engagement outlined in this Framework. Some ways in which Maryland's Head Start programs meet the family engagement goals include providing numerous parent trainings aimed to **promote family well-being** (Goal 1) and **connect families to their peers and to the community** (Goal 6) through opportunities to network and share experiences. Families are also empowered through the adult education component of their program that **supports the educational aspirations of parents and families** (Goal 4) as well as through participation in Head Start Policy Councils, which **support the development of families as leaders and child advocates** (Goal 7).

Head Start programs strive to engage families in a variety of ways. Programs offer many opportunities for parents to build their skills as members of the workforce (e.g., English for Speakers of Other Languages and computer trainings) as well as attend trainings on topics such as child development, abuse prevention, parenting techniques, and kindergarten transition. Furthermore, programs seek to connect families to resources to meet their individual needs, inviting families to attend collaborative forums with other community agencies and connecting families with food pantries, clothing, mentoring, social services, and job training. Programs are required to have a Policy Council, a form of shared program governance in which parents discuss issues and make decisions on program policy, budget, and curriculum; perform community outreach; and give testimony at county council and board of education meetings to advocate for Head Start and all preschool programs.

These examples of family engagement take place in all programs operated by the state's 19 federally funded Head Start grantees.

For more information, see: <http://www.md-hsa.org/>

of children who are dual language learners).

- Use a management information system that is accessible to families and that assists teachers in sharing child assessment information with parents in an understandable, family-friendly format about children's progress.
- Ensure families have ongoing opportunities to discuss child assessment data so that families are prepared to initiate and/or participate in similar discussions with teachers in the formal education system.
- Support parents as learners in parenting education programs that help parents learn more about their child's learning, development, and behavior.
- Support family literacy activities.
- Encourage families to observe and participate in child learning and development during home visits and in classrooms.
- Ensure families have ongoing opportunities to discuss their observations and concerns about their child's strengths and challenges prior to transitions to and from

early care and education settings and public schools.

- Share information with families about activities and everyday interactions with children that promote school readiness as outlined by the Maryland Early Learning Standards.
- Provide families with information about child development and the impact of transitions on children across early childhood and school settings.
- Encourage parent-to-parent support when participating in parent meetings about children's learning and development.

### Impact Area: Community Partnerships

- Link families with support systems, peer-to-peer groups, and resources.
- Participate in community meetings and initiatives that increase program capacity to respond to the needs and interests of families.
- Support family experiences with community resources that support children's learning and development, such as libraries and museums.
- Share information with families about resources and services for children with disabilities and special health needs.
- Collaborate with community organizations that share parents' concerns and interests.

- Form partnerships with educational resources in the community and beyond, including higher education institutions, to support families' learning interests and educational goals.
- Form partnerships with adult educators who creatively enhance education and training opportunities for families.
- Coordinate services for children and families as they transition from one early childhood setting to another, private or public, child care or elementary school.
- Provide advocacy training and opportunities for families to develop and use advocacy skills in the context of their child's lifelong learning and in other ways of interest to the parent.

## MARYLAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACTION: CHILD CARE AND PARENT CAFÉS

Child care is a diverse delivery and support system, mostly offered by private individuals and organizations and paid directly by families. Because the system is so responsive to the needs of working parents and adults in school who have young children—the busiest people in the State—child care providers report that supporting children's primary caregivers by offering parent engagement activities can be challenging. One promising approach being implemented through Maryland's Network of Child Care Resource Centers (CCRCs) is the Strengthening Families Parent Cafés. These are guided conversations designed to share the collective knowledge of families and build a network of community support among them. These events **promote family well-being** (Goal 1) and **connect families to their peers and to the community** (Goal 6) by fostering social connections and parental resilience. Furthermore, Parent Cafés can **support the development of families as leaders and child advocates** (Goal 7) by engaging parents, child care professionals, and other community members in conversations about the needs of families, how to meet those needs, and the role each neighbor can play in strengthening families and communities.

In Maryland, staff from the CCRC network have been trained as Facilitators to conduct Parent Cafés for parents and providers of children from birth to age five, based on the five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

During a Café, a group of 20-30 parents and other community members take seats, five at a table, set café-style. A unique question is posed at each table where it is discussed by the participants for approximately 20 minutes. Then participants move to another table, where the Table Host presents the question, brings the group up-to-date on what the last group discussed, and facilitates the conversation about the question available at that table. Participants visit at least three different tables. The process concludes with a list of themes identified by the participants and of next steps for future Cafés. The group may come up with some resources that meet identified needs, ideas or approaches that respond to common concerns, decide on a specific topic for the next discussion, or identify a speaker to invite to their next Café to address something they'd like to know more about. In this way, Parent Café conversations harness community knowledge.

Child care providers who facilitate Cafés report that the experience helps them understand what parents are facing and get useful ideas about how their programs can support families whose children are in their care. Facilitator and Table Host trainings are offered periodically by Maryland Family Network. Call (410) 659-7701, ext. 121 for the most recent schedule.

**For more information about Parent Cafés, see: <http://mfncnvio.net/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5235>**



## Appendix A: Outcome Alignment of the ED and Head Start Family Engagement Frameworks

The *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework* includes a set of family engagement outcomes, strategies, and progress measures that promote and measure parent and family engagement at the program level. The Head Start Framework identifies seven family engagement outcome areas. To support programs in meeting the outcomes, the Framework provides strategies targeting the “program impact areas” such as the program environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning, and community partnerships.

The Department of Education (ED) Family Engagement Framework (still in development) also identifies desired family outcomes as well as program and staff outcomes. The ED Framework focuses on building the collective capacity across multiple stakeholders involved in supporting family engagement. It includes system (organizational) components for building capacity, process components to foster collaborative school/program and family partnerships, and desired outcomes for school/program staff and for families.

Department of Education’s Intended Outcomes for Families (draft)	Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes
Families are actively engaged, from cradle to career, in their child’s academic, social and emotional development	<p><b>Parent–Child Relationships:</b> Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child’s learning and development.</p> <p><b>Families as Lifelong Educators:</b> Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.</p>
Work in partnership with school and Local Education Agency staff to support and share the responsibility for student achievement and school improvement	<p><b>Family Engagement in Transitions:</b> Parents and families support and advocate for their child’s learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to Kindergarten through Elementary School.</p>
Have developed the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to negotiate the multiple roles (supporters, encouragers, monitors, decision-makers, advocates, collaborators) of effective family engagement	<p><b>Families as Advocates and Leaders:</b> Families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or community and state organizing activities to improve children’s development and learning experiences.</p>
Feel honored and respected by school staff	<p>This is an overarching theme of the Head Start Framework and is included in the program environment section</p>
	<p><b>Family Well-being</b></p>
	<p><b>Families as Learners</b></p>
	<p><b>Family Connections to Peers and Community</b></p>

## Appendix B: National and State Family Engagement Resources

**Title:** The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Resource Catalogue 1.0

**Link:** [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/Resource\\_Catalogue\\_041112.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/Resource_Catalogue_041112.pdf)

**Source:** OHS National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE)

**Description:** *Annotated catalog of exemplary resources to promote effective parent, family, and community engagement in support of young children’s learning, development, and school readiness. Organized according to The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE Framework). In this first edition of the catalog you will find books, articles, webinars, and other useful resources—most of which are available free of charge on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website.*

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**Title:** Head Start and Early Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies

**Link:** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/rbc-coordinated-integrated-services.pdf>

**Source:** NCPFCE

**Description:** *Technical assistance resource that outlines the knowledge, skills, and actions for staff working with families in Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) programs. This document is a tool to assist programs with implementing the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. These competencies represent both research-based and best practices in the early childhood, human services, and social work fields. This resource was developed with broad input from Head Start and Early Head Start programs, parents, and the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement.*

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**Title:** Understanding Family Engagement Outcomes: Research to Practice Series Positive Parent–Child Relationships

**Link:** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/parent-child-relationships.pdf>

**Source:** NCPFCE

**Description:** *Aligned with related Head Start Performance Standards, this resource presents a selected summary of research, proven interventions, and program strategies intended to be useful for the Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) community.*

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**Title:** Using the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework in Your Program: Markers of Progress

**Link:** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/ncpfce-markers-of-progress.pdf>

**Source:** NCPFCE

**Description:** *This resource was created to help you recognize your program’s accomplishments in engaging parents, families, and the community. It also offers you the opportunity to identify aspects of your work in this area that can be strengthened and offers ideas for new and innovative ways to enhance your efforts. The information you gather from your observations, conversations, and reflections is important data that can be incorporated into your decision-making about your whole program. In fact, this guide and the subsequent information you collect, could be utilized to inform the required annual program Self-Assessment.*

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**Title:** Family Engagement and Ongoing Child Assessment: Responsibilities, Perspectives, and Strategies

**Link:** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/family-engagement-and-ongoing-child-assessment-081111.pdf>

**Source:** NCPFCE

**Description:** *Addresses the perspectives of parents and program staff in the sharing of child assessment information through the*

*formation of partnerships and suggests strategies for bringing those perspectives together. It outlines a framework for building partnerships between program staff and parents that establish ongoing communication, enhance teacher-child and parent child relationships, and help prepare children and families for transitions to later schooling.*

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**Title:** Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

**Link:** Please see the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement website for this resource.

**Source:** NCPFCE

**Description:** *Presents responses to common questions about the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.*

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**Title:** Engaging Families in Promoting Positive Health: Ideas for Events and Activities from NBCDI Affiliates

**Link:** <http://www.nbcdi.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Family%20Engagement%20Event%20Handbook.pdf>

**Source:** NBCDI

**Description:** *Describes innovative and culturally-relevant family engagement events and activities related to health and nutrition that our Affiliates have developed and implemented. We created this manual so that Affiliates and partners implementing the Healthy Practices Program – and other health education initiatives – will have tools to help them plan and evaluate meaningful workshops and events.*

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**Title:** An Activity Book For African American Families: Helping Children Cope with Crisis

**Link:** [http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/cope\\_with\\_crisis\\_book/pages/index.aspx](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/cope_with_crisis_book/pages/index.aspx)

**Source:** NBCDI/NICHHD

**Description:** *Developed in response to events of 9/11, but also designed to help families face everyday hardships such as crime and poverty. Includes information about how parents can help children cope with crises in a sensitive and responsive way, as well as a series of developmentally appropriate activities for parents and children to engage in together.*

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**Title:** Parent Teacher Education Connection Website

**Link:** <http://tcet.unt.edu/home/pte.html>

**Source:** Kansas Parent Information Resource Center

**Description:** *Developed by KPIRC and University of Northern Texas, this website provides six online modules for preparing teachers to work with families, based on the National PTA Standards. Each module contains goals, interactive content and activities, and several relevant program studies. The module topics are: 1) Welcoming, 2) Communicating, 3) Supporting Student Success, 4) Speaking Up for Every Child, 5) Sharing Power, and 6) Collaborating with the Community.*

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**Title:** Helping Parents Become Interventionists Through the Use of Child Assessment Data

**Link:** <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/helping-parents-become-interventionists-through-the-use-of-child-assessment-data>

**Source:** Harvard Family Resource Project

**Description:** *Discusses sharing data with families and illustrates how program staff and parents can work as partners to review child assessment data and co-create goals for children.*

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**Title:** Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Simulation

**Link:** [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce\\_simulation](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce_simulation)

**Source:** National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement/Harvard Family Research Project

**Description:** *This simulation activity helps early childhood educators explore and practice everyday strategies to develop a positive, goal-directed relationship with a family in a virtual Head Start center. While the simulation was designed for Head Start/Early Head Start professionals, early childhood educators outside of Head Start can access the simulation and will find the relationship-building strategies useful in their own work.*

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**Title:** Harvard Graduate School of Education Pre K-12 Parent Survey

**Link:** <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/a-new-tool-for-understanding-family-school-relationships-the-harvard-graduate-school-of-education-prek-12-parent-survey>

**Source:** Harvard Family Research Project

**Description:** *The Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) research team recently developed a set of survey “scales”—groups of related questions that are analyzed as a whole to improve measurement precision—to assess family–school relationships in schools serving Pre-K to 12th grade students. The scales, designed to elicit input from parents, can help schools evaluate interventions that they are implementing to try to improve family–school relationships, see how family–school relationships develop as students advance from one grade to the next, or simply collect baseline information on their strengths and areas that need improvement in their family–school relationships. The tool is unique in that it is a rigorously developed, web-based set of survey scales that schools and districts can access online and administer to parents with school children of all ages.*

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**Title:** Family Engagement and Children with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Educators and Parents

**Link:** <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-engagement-and-children-with-disabilities-a-resource-guide-for-educators-and-parents>

**Source:** Harvard Family Research Project

**Description:** *A resource guide designed to help parents and special educators establish a comfortable and effective partnership in service of promoting successful outcomes for children with disabilities. Includes research reports, journal articles, examples of best practices, and tools that suggest methods for developing productive collaborations so that educators and families can, together, ensure better services for children in their care.*

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**Title:** Family Engagement in Early Childhood: A Resource Guide for Early Learning Challenge Grant Recipients

**Link:** <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-engagement-in-early-childhood-a-resource-guide-for-early-learning-challenge-grant-recipients>

**Source:** Harvard Family Research Project

**Description:** *To support RTTT–ELC grant recipients’ efforts, Harvard Family Research Project produced this selective list of resources about engaging and supporting families with young children. This list includes journal articles, practical guides, webinars, and presentations that cover the topics of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement; training early childhood educators on family engagement; promoting family support and engagement statewide; sharing data with families; and creating programs that engage families.*

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**Title:** Teaching Cases on Family Engagement: Early Learning (Ages 0–8)

**Link:** <http://www.hfrp.org/ECE-TeachingCases>

**Source:** Harvard Family Research Project

**Description:** *This set of teaching cases for early childhood education programs was developed by Harvard Family Research Project to highlight critical dilemmas in family–school–community relations, especially among low-income and culturally diverse families.*

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**Title:** Connecting with Parents in the Early Years

**Link:** <http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/pubs/connecting.html>

**Source:** Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting (CEEP)

**Description:** *This seven-chapter e-book outlines effective ways to communicate with parents, including those who are hard to reach.*

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**Title:** Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library

**Link:** <http://everychildreadytoread.org>

**Source:** American Library Association

**Description:** *A parent education toolkit of resources to help public librarians and other early literacy centers present workshops that help prepare parent's/caregivers for their critical role as their child's first teacher.*

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**Title:** Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families, & Schools

**Link:** <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/Transition%20into%20Formal%20Schooling/Enhancing%20the%20Transition%20to%20Kindergarten%20rev.PDF>

**Source:** National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) Kindergarten Project

**Description:** *As part of the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) Kindergarten Project, Marcia Kraft-Sayre and Robert Pianta produced this manual on transitioning students from early learning centers to kindergarten through the use of social connections.*

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**Title:** Partnering with Families in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

**Link:** <http://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/family-engagement/index.html>

**Source:** Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

**Description:** *Early childhood mental health consultants can use information from this web-based tutorial to strengthen their understanding of how to facilitate strong partnerships with families within the consultation approach and overcome common barriers, building a framework within which the quality work begins and develops.*

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**Title:** Strengthening Families

**Link:** <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families>

**Source:** Center for the Study of Social Policy

**Description:** *Offers many resources to help prevent child abuse and neglect by helping early care and education programs to assist families develop "protective factors" which contribute to child safety and well-being. Resources such as self-assessments, case studies of state implementation, and guides for early care and education programs are available.*

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**Title:** Every Child Ready for School: Helping Adults Inspire Young Children to Learn

**Link:** <http://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=3529>

**Source:** American Library Association

**Description:** *Reflecting the combined expertise of a reading specialist, an outreach librarian, and an early literacy trainer, Every Child Ready for School keeps libraries at the forefront of early literacy and school readiness information delivery. Focusing on training the caregiver, this handbook explains how to help day-care providers, homeschoolers, and others who care for young children foster school-readiness skills among their charges; arms librarians with a step-by-step workshop model, with tips on implementing and evaluating the program; and provides guidance for coordinating workshops with other library early literacy initiatives. Includes resources and activities to share with participants.*

*Presenting models which can be easily adapted to state-mandated school-readiness requirements, Every Child Ready for School helps libraries fashion their own innovative community early literacy outreach programs.*

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**Title:** Tender Topics: Picture Books About Childhood Challenges

**Link:** [http://www.ipgbook.com/tender-topics-products-9781937589349.php?page\\_id=21](http://www.ipgbook.com/tender-topics-products-9781937589349.php?page_id=21)

**Source:** Huron Street Press

**Description:** *A reading specialist, an outreach librarian, and a children's librarian combine their considerable expertise in this essential guide for parents that brings reading, early literacy, child development issues, and picture books together. Advising parents who are wondering how to talk to their young child about difficult topics such as death, loneliness, or fear, this authoritative collection of appropriate picture books, Tender Topics: Picture Books About Childhood Challenges, makes broaching the subject easier. Authors Dorothy Stoltz, Elaine Czarnecki, and Buff Kabn have created an annotated listing that includes more than 300 high-quality, carefully selected picture books that are ideal for opening discussion about tender topics and establishing bonds between generations that can help parents and children better weather the challenges families face every day.*

## Appendix C: Key Terms and Definitions

**co-parenting relationship:** a situation in which the parents of a child are not married, living together, or in a romantic relationship together, for example the relationship between two separated or divorced parents who are both involved in caring and parenting for their shared children.

**dual language learners:** children who are acquiring two or more languages simultaneously. These children are learning a second language (or more) while continuing to develop their first language.

**family engagement:** building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent–child relationships, and the ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike. Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood settings, school, and community. (For a more complete definition, see page 3).

**family partnerships:** relationships in which programs and parents work together toward shared goals of facilitating child and family well-being.

**family well-being:** the safety, physical and mental health, and financial security of families so that they can successfully parent their young children

**Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework:** guiding document published by the Office of Head Start to serve as a “roadmap” for describing parent and family engagement outcomes that ultimately support children’s learning and development. This document includes definitions of major outcomes as well as examples of strategies to promote progress toward these outcomes.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** federal law that ensures that all eligible children with disabilities receive appropriate early intervention, special education, and related services.

**Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant:** federal grant competition seeking to improve early learning and development programs by supporting States’ reform efforts in providing integrated systems of high-quality early learning programs and services.

**school readiness:** a child’s readiness to enter a social environment primarily focused on learning. Aspects that influence a child’s ability to access and benefit from later educational experiences include cognitive, social–emotional, language and emergent literacy, and physical health and development. Other factors that should be considered include a child’s early home and early childhood education experiences, the normal wide variation in children’s learning and development, and the developmental appropriateness of kindergarten expectations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Rafoth, M.A., Buchenauer, E. L., Crissman, K. K., and Halko, J. L. (2004). School readiness— preparing children for kindergarten and beyond: Information for parents. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists