



EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Adopted by SC ABC Quality with permission from the
Indiana Early Childhood Family Engagement Workgroup



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SC ABC Quality acknowledges the overall work of the ELAC Family Engagement Workgroup whose members are listed below. The following members contributed significantly to the development of this Toolkit: Anita Allison, Mindy Bennett, Jim Cohen, Michael Conn-Powers, Jen Drake, Jackie Garvey, Jennifer Mohr, John Peirce, Keith Reissaus, Wylie Sirk, Meghan Smith, Chris Whitmire and Nathan Williamson. Katie Herron, research associate at the Early Childhood Center of Indiana University, and Amanda Lopez and Kyle Wehmann with Transform Consulting Group also contributed. Paths to QUALITY™ coaches Jennifer Cioni of the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children and Tikila Welch of Early Learning Indiana Child Care Answers provided valuable perspectives.

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ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Children develop in many environments. These include their family, culture, and community. A child's family plays the most critical role in that child's development. You and your program are in a unique position to promote children's well-being. You can do this – today and into the future – by engaging their parents and families.

This Family Engagement Toolkit is intended to support your program along a journey toward new heights of engagement. It includes the following three components:

- 1. The Family Engagement Self-Assessment** for Programs provides a roadmap for ongoing program improvement. It includes 22 indicators of family engagement. There are four stages of advancement: Entering, Emerging, Progressing and Excelling.
- 2. The Program, Family, and Child Outcomes** describe how program actions can help transform family interactions with their children. These interactions can produce positive outcomes in child behavior and achievement.
- 3. The Framework** describes the philosophical basis for family engagement.

As you consider what you already are doing to engage families, we hope that you will be inspired with a renewed spirit. We hope that spirit will lead to even more effective collaboration with families and your community. We also hope that you will feel energized as you, your staff, your families and community come together to take next steps in parent, family and community engagement practices.

DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT

To download the Family Engagement Toolkit, go to: scchildcare.org

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

If you have any questions or would like to share feedback, contact your ABC Quality Assessor or your SC Child Care Resource and Referral Quality Coach, or visit the Division of Early Care and Education website at scchildcare.org.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

Resources used to develop this toolkit may be useful to programs. They include the following:

The Harvard Family Research Project:

www.hfrp.org

Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework, Center for the Study of Social Policy

www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Interactive Framework

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/framework>

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

www.esc16.net/users/0020/Resources/6TypesJ.Epstien.pdf

The U.S. Department of Education's, Partners in Education A Dual Capacity-Building

Framework for Family-School Partnerships: www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOCUS AREAS

Children learn and have success in school when Indiana's early educators build strong relationships with families. The following practices can serve as a guide:



THE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Family Engagement Self-Assessment allows you to assess your current family engagement practices on 22 indicators across four progressive stages (Entering, Emerging, Progressing, and Excelling). Many indicators at the Excelling level align with NAEYC family engagement standards for early childhood program accreditation.

Assessing your program will help you see and celebrate the great work you are already doing to engage families. We hope you will view this as a roadmap for continuous improvement. The Self-Assessment allows you to identify areas you would like to improve. It can help you choose systemic, integrated, and comprehensive approaches that have strong potential for attaining family and child outcomes.

The Self-Assessment was developed through hours of discussion and feedback from early childhood experts. It is still a work in progress. As you use the tool to assess your family engagement practices, we invite you to share your ideas with your coaches and with us.



GETTING STARTED

The following self-assessment has 22 indicators that are grouped and color coded according to the 4 family engagement focus areas: Strengthen, Assist, Empower, and Support. Each indicator is broken out across 4 progressive levels:

Entering: This provider is beginning to think about family engagement. It is making some initial attempts to effectively engage families.

Emerging: This provider is aware of the importance of family engagement. It is making attempts to effectively engage families.

Progressing: This provider understands the importance of family engagement. It is making organized and diverse attempts to effectively engage families.

Excelling: This provider embraces the importance of family engagement. It is making consistent and diverse attempts to effectively engage families in high-level ways including and across all components of the family engagement framework.

Use the assessment as a guide to help you think about and document your family engagement practices. You can fill out the assessment one indicator at a time or in chunks--whatever is most comfortable and manageable for you. You might even use it to start conversations at a staff meeting or with the families in your program. It's all up to you.

1 STRENGTHEN

1 Establishing Relationships with Families

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	<p>Program staff make contact with families at the start of each year (or when the family enters the program). The purpose is to establish positive relationships, gather basic information and support the inclusion of children with disabilities or special health care needs, if needed.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	<p>Program staff make contact with families at the start of each year (or when the family enters the program). The purpose is to establish positive relationships, gather basic information, and to review written program information. Examples include: how the program communicates with families, health and safety information, wellness, emergency plans, tuition and enrollment policies.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	<p>Program staff make contact with families at the start of each year (or when the family enters the program). The purpose is to gather basic information, review written program information that includes information about teaching and learning. They also listen to determine perceptions of child strengths, academic and personal needs, family routines, individual learning styles, and behavior management.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	<p>Program staff use a variety of formal and informal strategies to get to know and learn from families about their family structure, their preferred child-rearing practices and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The program staff then actively uses this information to adapt its environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to the families they serve.</p>

List your practices and activities here:

2 Establishing a System for Two-Way Communication

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	<p>Program staff communicate daily with the parent or family member about the child's day.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	<p>Program staff have a system in place for two-way communication with families as needed.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	<p>Program staff have a system in place for two-way communication with families it uses on a weekly basis. It is individualized to each family.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	<p>Program staff have a system in place for maintaining regular, on-going, two-way communication with families. The communication is about children's activities, shared care-giving issues, and developmental milestones. The purpose is to ensure a smooth transition between home and program.</p>

List your practices and activities here:

1 STRENGTHEN

3 Communicating Accomplishments and Concerns

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff warmly greet each child and family upon arrival and departure.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff intentionally structure pick-up and drop off to make it as easy as possible to touch base and exchange information with families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff regularly contact individual families with news about positive accomplishments and child learning as well as concerns about their children. They use appropriate technology to do so.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	When challenging behaviors arise, program staff collaborate with families to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

List your practices and activities here:

4 Holding Regular Family Conferences

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff have a system in place for communicating pertinent information to families in an annual family conference.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff have a family conference model that involves: sharing data child and classroom data in a simple way, encouraging questions, setting goals, and providing concrete suggestions to address those goals at home.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff use a variety of mechanisms such as family conferences or home visits to promote dialogue with families. The program staff asks adults to translate or interpret communications as needed.

List your practices and activities here:

1 STRENGTHEN

5 Communicating Program Philosophy

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff begin to think and talk about their underlying philosophy. They begin to draft a written statement expressing this.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff are guided by a written statement of philosophy that is shared with families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff are guided by a written statement of philosophy that is shared with families. It explicitly ensures the inclusion of all children. It is used to guide decisions, including curricular activities, activities to promote partnerships with families, professional development, and hiring of staff if applicable.

List your practices and activities here:

6 Communicating Curriculum

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff use a variety of formal and informal methods to communicate with families about the program philosophy and curriculum objectives. These include the educational goals and effective strategies that can be used by families to promote their children's learning. Methods may include parent handbooks, newsletters, orientation, and/or family meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff implements the curriculum in a manner that reflects responsiveness to families' home values, beliefs, experiences and language.

List your practices and activities here:

1 STRENGTHEN

7 Communicating Information about Parenting and Child Development

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff nurture children and models nurturing for family members.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff provide families with parenting and child development information.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff share information about community events with families and facilitates participation (for example, program staff attend as well, offer transportation, childcare).
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff offer parenting and child development information through multiple avenues to meet diverse adult learning styles. These may include written materials, verbal sharing and informational events.

List your practices and activities here:

8 Respecting and Incorporating Cultural Diversity

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	The program staff are responsive if families share information regarding their culture or traditions.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	The program environment represents a multi-cultural approach to learning (diverse toys, posters, books, displays, dolls, for example).
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff gather information when a child first enters the program about family structure, favorite traditions, important cultural information that the family would want the program to understand. Information about the child and family is used to represent each child and family in the classroom environment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff invite family members to share information about important traditions and cultures with the children and staff. Family members are invited personally and in multiple ways.

List your practices and activities here:

1 STRENGTHEN

9 Facilitating Family Participation

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	The program is easy to navigate and welcoming to families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff encourage families to visit and observe at any time.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff provide diverse opportunities for families to participate in program activities (for example, volunteering, sharing a tradition, planning an event).
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff invite families to participate in program activities and volunteer opportunities that fit their interests and skills and the needs of the program.

List your practices and activities here:

10 Assessing and Improving Family Engagement Practices

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff investigate using a formal evidence-based process to assess the quality of their family engagement practices.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff use an evidence-based assessment tool to measure the quality of their current family engagement practices.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff use the data gathered from the tool to inform a broader discussion/process around improving family engagement (for example, an action plan).

List your practices and activities here:

2 ASSIST

11 Supporting Transitions

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff help families find information about transition through local agencies if families request it.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff provide informal and formal communications including written information to families about the schools in the area. Such information may include the mission, goals, organizational structure, best ways to communicate, role of family engagement.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff have a formal process (e.g., written transition policies and procedures) for helping families with the transition to Kindergarten.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff establish linkages with other early education programs and local elementary schools. They use these linkages to improve the quality of information and the ease of communication for families as they transition to other programs.

List your practices and activities here:

12 Assessing and Improving Transition Practices

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff begin to think about how to improve family engagement practices. They investigate options for using a formal model or process to assess and improve the quality of their transition practices.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff use a formal model or process to assess its current transition practices.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff implement strategies for improvement based on the data collected from the assessment.

List your practices and activities here:

2 ASSIST

13 Facilitating Family Networking

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff introduce families to one another at pick-up and drop-off. They facilitate conversations.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff reach out to new families prior to the start of the school year (or as soon as the child enters the program) to offer opportunities to participate and to meet other families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff help families connect with one another using a variety of modes such as social media, parent directory, and/or parent's night out events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff facilitate opportunities for families to meet one another on a formal and informal basis, work together on projects to support the program, and learn from and provide support for each other.

List your practices and activities here:

14 Facilitating Family Events

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff provide at least one opportunity a year for families to socialize.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff make it a priority to personally invite all families to school-related functions and to show individualized interest in each family's participation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff actively consider family schedules and availability when planning an event. For example, they ask families directly or do a survey.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff use family input to provide multiple opportunities for families to socialize. Staff foster a sense of community by co-organizing or co-hosting with families.

List your practices and activities here:

2 ASSIST

15 Facilitating Connections for New and/or Isolated Families

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff identify families who are new or who have been less involved. They make an effort to talk with them at pick-up and drop-off. They introduce them to other families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff make an effort to talk with families during family conferences about what staff can do to make it easier for families to engage with other families in the program.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff encourage peer to peer connections by asking families to reach out and engage other families, particularly new families and more isolated families in the program community.

List your practices and activities here:

16 Connecting Families with Relevant Resources

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff have knowledge of 3-4 critical community resources.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff help families find information about community resources when needed.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff develop partnerships and professional relationships with other agencies and organizations in the community. This helps further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of the children and the families that they serve. It also helps to improve communication across agencies to achieve mutually desired family outcomes.

List your practices and activities here:

3 EMPOWER

17 Involving Families in Program and Policy Decisions

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff collect information from families on an on-going basis to make program and policy decisions (by using surveys, for example).
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff provide opportunities and support for families to serve as leaders and decision-makers regarding issues and policies. This allows staff to gain their insights. It allows family voices to contribute to policy. Methods may include focus groups or parent meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	The program has a governing or advisory group that includes families as members and active participants.

List your practices and activities here:

18 Communicating Child Concerns and Issues

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff share any child concerns with the family in a timely manner.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff always consult family members on decisions that have an impact on their child. Family members have an opportunity to develop a plan with staff.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff incorporate family feedback into any plan developed to address a child concern or issue. Staff offer the family frequent updates on implementation of the plan.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff provide support and encourage families' efforts to negotiate health, mental health, assessment, and educational services for their children.

List your practices and activities here:

3 EMPOWER

19 Supporting Family Opportunities for Leadership

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff share information with families about opportunities for leadership at the program or community level.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff help to support parents' opportunities for leadership at the program or community level.

List your practices and activities here:

4 SUPPORT

20 Connecting Families with Information and Resources on Child Health and Development

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff provide information to families, at least once a year, on topics addressing health and child development.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff share information with families on an on-going basis on topics of interest to families regarding the health and development of their children.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community. They share the list with families as needed.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community based on the pattern of needs they observe among families and based on what families request. They share the list with families and assist them with locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development.

List your practices and activities here:

21 Recognizing and Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Stress

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff recognize common signs of stress in children and families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff talk with the family about their observations or concerns about a child who is experiencing stress. Staff discuss how they will respond appropriately.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff offer referral information to the family and helps the family access the referral information as needed.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff make a point of following up with families experiencing stress to find out if they need further referrals or assistance of to consider how best to help the child cope while in the classroom.

List your practices and activities here:

4 SUPPORT

22 Communicating about Developmental Assessment

Not here yet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entering	Program staff share information about the importance of developmental assessments with families. Staff provide information about how to obtain such assessments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Program staff conduct developmental assessments and shares results with families.
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressing	Program staff engage with families from the beginning by sharing information about the assessments being used as well as the results.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excelling	Program staff share the following assessment information with families: why the assessment method was chosen; how and when it will be used; how it is sensitive to issues of culture, language, disability, etc.; how families can contribute information from home to the assessment process; and next steps if the assessment reveals a cause for concern.

List your practices and activities here:

PROGRAM, FAMILY, AND CHILD OUTCOMES

The next four pages (20-23) relate outcomes to the four focus areas and to the goals set forth in the Family Engagement Framework on page 24.

This section describes how program family engagement outcomes can help transform family interactions with their children. As a result, those family interactions can produce positive outcomes in child behavior and achievement.

On the pages that follow, the desired Program Outcomes for family engagement are listed under each Framework Goal.

By achieving those outcomes, programs can influence the attainment of the Family Outcomes listed below the Program Outcomes. The combination of program and family outcomes work together toward achieving the ultimate child outcomes listed at the bottom of each page.



Family Engagement Focus Areas

PROGRAM FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES LEAD TO FAMILY OUTCOMES, WHICH LEAD TO CHILD OUTCOMES.





Strengthen Families as Child’s Primary Educators and Nurturers

Families develop warm and supportive relationships that nurture their child’s learning and development.



FRAMEWORK GOAL

SUPPORT PARENTS AS CHILD’S FIRST TEACHER

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Program staff recognize and support existing ways families are supporting their children’s development and success.
- Program staff have good understanding of how to implement multiple, ongoing, meaningful two-way communication with families.
- Program staff can develop curriculum and program activities that connect families to the learning of their children.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families help their child learn important skills at home and in their communities.
- Families enjoy and celebrate their child’s learning and developmental accomplishments.
- Families share information about their child with early educators to inform teaching and learning.
- Children attend school regularly (at least 90% attendance).
- Families partner with teachers and use new approaches to teach and support their child’s learning at home and in the community.
- Families seek out services and supports for their child’s learning, developmental, and behavioral challenges.

FRAMEWORK GOAL

PROMOTE POSITIVE PARENT, FAMILY AND CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Program staff have skills and understanding to develop policies and activities that create a welcoming program environment for families.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families understand and respond effectively to their children’s behavior.
- Families use positive parenting practices that support the stages of their children’s learning and development.
- Families learn new ways to ensure the health and safety of their children.

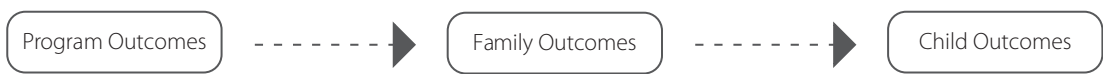
CHILD OUTCOMES

- Increase in physical development, including gross and fine motor skills.
- Increase in ability to demonstrate basic cognitive processes and pre-academic skills.
- Increase in social and emotional development.
- Increase in social interaction and engagement in learning experiences.
- Increase in language development and literacy knowledge/skills.



Assist Families as Connected, Supported Members of the Community

Families form connections with peers and mentors in formal and informal social networks that enhance family well-being and allow for smooth transitions into and between educational settings.



FRAMEWORK GOAL

CONNECT PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO THEIR PEERS AND TO THE COMMUNITY

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Program staff have the knowledge and skills to connect families with peers and community resources.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families exchange knowledge, resources, confidence, and empowerment through interactions with other parents and families.
- Families reach out to other parents and families to solve problems and support their decision making.
- Families know who to contact in their community when questions or needs arise.

FRAMEWORK GOAL

SUPPORT FAMILIES THROUGH THE CARE AND EDUCATION TRANSITIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

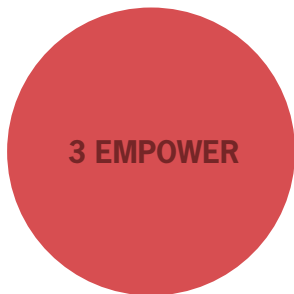
- Program staff have the knowledge and skills to help families make effective transitions to kindergarten.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families understand and respond effectively to their children’s behavior.
- Families use positive parenting practices that support the stages of their children’s learning and development.
- Families learn new ways to ensure the health and safety of their children.

CHILD OUTCOMES

- Increase in physical development, including gross and fine motor skills.
- Increase in ability to demonstrate basic cognitive processes and pre-academic skills.
- Increase in social and emotional development.
- Increase in social interaction and engagement in learning experiences.
- Increase in language development and literacy knowledge/skills.



Empower Families as Child Advocates and Leaders

Families build the confidence and knowledge to become empowered to advocate for their children's education and other areas affecting their children's lives.



FRAMEWORK GOAL

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILIES AS LEADERS AND CHILD ADVOCATES

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Program staff have the knowledge and skills to create leadership and advocacy opportunities for families.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families express questions, concerns, and recommendations about their child's education.
- Families express opinions concerning their child's program's goals and policies.
- Families know and assert their rights under federal and state laws.
- Families participate on program boards and/or participate in other decision making opportunities.
- Families reach out and engage families (e.g., new families) to offer knowledge and support.
- Families volunteer in and/or contribute to their children's classrooms and program.
- As children transition to new settings, families seek out new leadership and/or advocacy opportunities.

CHILD OUTCOMES

- Increase in physical development, including gross and fine motor skills.
- Increase in ability to demonstrate basic cognitive processes and pre-academic skills.
- Increase in social and emotional development.
- Increase in social interaction and engagement in learning experiences.
- Increase in language development and literacy knowledge/skills.



Support Families as Safe, Healthy, and Self-Sufficient Caregivers

Families are safe, healthy, and stable; and parents advance their own parenting, life, and career goals through education and training.



FRAMEWORK GOAL PROMOTE FAMILY WELL-BEING

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- If families experience stress or trauma and need help, they reach out to their child’s education program for assistance.
- Families express confidence in addressing family specific needs and/or interests related to safety, housing, health, employment, and finances.
- When needed, families access developmental and health screening resources for their child.
- When needed, families access community resources to meet their safety, health, and financial needs.
- Families identify challenges to their well-being and have the knowledge, strength, and resources to overcome them.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families exchange knowledge, resources, confidence, and empowerment through interactions with other parents and families.
- Families reach out to other parents and families to solve problems and support their decision making.
- Families know who to contact in their community when questions or needs arise.

FRAMEWORK GOAL SUPPORT THE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE FAMILY

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Programs model lifelong learning and engage families in a culture of lifelong learning.

FAMILY OUTCOMES

- Families set learning goals that align with their interests and career aspirations.
- Families enroll and participate in courses, training programs, and/or learning opportunities that support their education and career goals.

CHILD OUTCOMES

- Increase in physical development, including gross and fine motor skills.
- Increase in ability to demonstrate basic cognitive processes and pre-academic skills.
- Increase in social and emotional development.
- Increase in social interaction and engagement in learning experiences.
- Increase in language development and literacy knowledge/skills.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework puts forth a set of common goals focusing on key elements in early care and education settings. The successful implementation of this Framework promotes positive school readiness outcomes.

In **South Carolina** we work together so that every child can develop to his or her fullest potential – socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively and academically. Through growth in all of these domains, the child will become a healthy, capable, competent and powerful learner.

In South Carolina, Parent and Family Engagement is defined as:

- Families actively supporting their children’s learning and development, and sharing the responsibility with early care and education providers who are committed to engaging with families in meaningful, culturally respectful ways.
- Continuous across a child’s life, beginning in infancy and extending through college and career preparation programs.
- Occurring across the various early care and learning settings where children play and grow.

To that end, parent and family engagement practices must be initiated, implemented and supported by key elements with clear goals in mind. **South Carolina's** Parent and Family Engagement Framework articulates seven goals that define parent and family engagement initiatives and describes practices of early care and education providers.

KEY ELEMENTS + FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GOALS = SCHOOL READINESS OUTCOMES



KEY ELEMENTS

- Environment
- Family Partnerships
- Teaching & Learning
- Community Partnerships
- Professional Development
- Leadership
- Continuous Improvement



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

- Support Parents as Child’s First Teacher
- Promote Family Well Being
- Promote Positive Parent, Family and Child Relationships
- Support Educational Aspirations of the Family
- Support Engagement in Transition
- Connect Parents and Family to Peers and Community
- Create Leaders and Child Advocates



DEFINITIONS FOR THE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

SUPPORT PARENTS AS CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

Families are lifelong educators of their children. Beginning at birth, families teach their children important skills that will help them in school. Families and teachers are both strengthened when they partner to share knowledge. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators work with and support families in this role as teacher, families can most effectively promote the skills and behaviors their children will need to be successful in school.

PROMOTE POSITIVE PARENT, FAMILY AND CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Young children thrive in families where members care for one another and warm relationships exist. Children raised in supportive, predictable, and secure environments are free to focus their energies toward exploration and learning. Families with warm and positive relationships provide their children with the encouragement they need to persevere when problems and challenging situations occur. Opportunities to focus and persevere provide critical foundations for later learning in school. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators attend to and support positive family relationships, families are more stable and able to support children's learning.

PROMOTE FAMILY WELL-BEING

Accomplishing all other family engagement goals is possible when families are safe, healthy, and financially secure. When families have the skills, resources and confidence to address their basic needs, they have the time and energy to be their children's best teacher. Families learn to establish strong partnerships and advocate for their children when programs nurture and support the families' personal goals. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators connect with families, understand their struggles and help them to access needed resources, families can more easily take on roles that contribute to their child's learning.

SUPPORT THE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE FAMILY

In a changing society, each family member must be a lifelong learner. New parents learn to care for their children. Adult family members learn new skills and complete formal education requirements to attain their employment goals and support their family. Ongoing learning and education builds a sense of confidence, empowerment, and self-sufficiency. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators demonstrate the value and importance of education, and support families' educational aspirations, families are more likely to instill those same values and aspirations in their children.

SUPPORT FAMILIES THROUGH THE CARE AND EDUCATION TRANSITIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Transitions bring new opportunities for expanding children's learning and development. Informed and prepared families are better able to embrace new experiences. Families are more likely to engage in and support their children's continued learning when they see continuity of learning goals and expectations across settings and learning environments. If information sharing is modeled among all parties, families are more apt to see the importance of collaborative partnerships. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators take the time to plan for and support families during these transitions, families are more likely to respond by continuing their engagement.

CONNECT PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO THEIR PEERS AND TO THE COMMUNITY

Raising a family is hard work; sometimes parents and family members need the support of others with similar experiences to be successful. Some families may have a network of friends and other family members they can reach out to when they need support, encouragement, or resources. When families lack these personal networks or do not have opportunities to talk with other families, the need for help and formal supports can be critical. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators help families communicate their needs and connect them with supports, the family's well-being is enhanced and they are able to provide the care and nurturing their young children need.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILIES AS LEADERS AND CHILD ADVOCATES

While early childhood educators are strong advocates for young children, families must assume this role for the long term. As the constant throughout their child's life, families will be there during all transitions to new learning environments. When families have the knowledge and skills to articulate their child's strengths and needs, they can advocate for the services and education that will best meet their child's individual needs. This long-term role continues until their children have grown and can advocate for themselves. When **South Carolina's** early childhood educators help families adopt this lifespan perspective and equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and sense of empowerment, families become lifelong advocates for their children's education.