

# Resources

- Children's Home Society / Family Education Program  
<http://www.chs-ca.org/fep.html>
- A place of our own  
<http://www.aplaceofourown.org/schedule.php>
- Air Quality Index  
<http://www.arb.ca.gov/knowzone/students/airpollu/agi.htm>
- NAEYC Code of Ethics  
<http://www.caeyc.org/main/page/CodeofEthics>
- NAEYC A Guide for Families  
<http://editor.ne16.com/iaeyc/FamilyGuide.pdf>
- Family Resource Directory Stanislaus County Health Services Agency  
<http://www.schsa.org/PublicHealth/pdf/programs/ResDir.pdf>

# Family Participation

## Philosophy of family Participation

- Young children are dependent on their families for physical well being. (food, shelter, clothing, health care)
- Young children are dependent on their families for their emotional well-being. (love, encouragement, consistent, and gentle reminders of what is right and wrong)
- Young children are dependent on their families for developmental well being (communication, opportunities to crawl, walk, run, climb, play, and share new experiences)
- It is important for professionals to acknowledge the role of the family is that of first teacher!
- Family involvement is essential to reinforce and expand on classroom learning
- Classroom learning builds on interests and learning that occurs at home (reciprocal learning environments)

# Family Participation

“...programs that place major emphasis on involving the parent directly in activities fostering the child's development are likely to have constructive impact at any age, but the earlier such activities are begun, and the longer they are continued, the greater the benefit to the child”

Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1975

- Families have the greatest influence on a child's learning
- Early childhood educators role is ...
  - to recognize, encourage, and support the primary attachment between parents and children
  - recognize diversity of families
  - serve as a resource

# Family Participation

## Benefits of Family Participation

- **Involvement benefits the child, family, and program**
  - Belonging to group, making a contribution, be productive  
feel happy, develop new skills, manage stress, get to know others
- **Attitudes**
  - Culture may play a role on comfort of parents sharing information, planning jointly, or working together
  - Teachers may feel threatened to have parents in the classroom
- **Mutual Responsibility**
  - Parents and teachers develop collaborative relationship
  - Teachers must develop and practice new skills

# Family Participation

## Opportunities for Collaboration

- Home Visits
  - Planned at times convenient to family
- Family Visits to the classroom
  - Open door policy
- Family shares special interest or skill with classroom
- Quarterly Saturday breakfast
- Family comment on child notebook sent home by teacher
- Teachers send home weekly notes telling about child's favorite activities

# Family Participation

## Opportunities for Collaboration

- Communication

- Critical part of teaching team's responsibilities
- It takes time to establish trust
- People bring with them their past experiences, both positive and negative
- Allow time, create opportunities, encourage families to express their ideas, joys, goals, concerns
- Offer places to speak privately
- Regard all information as confidential
- Discuss program philosophy during enrollment and throughout the year
- Discuss expectations - ask parent to share what "success" means

# Family Participation

- Informal communication strategies
  - Drop-off and pick-up
    - Tell of day's activities, successes (Daily News), remind about meetings or events
    - Don't discuss problems or concerns (children are present)
    - First and last half-hour of day should be free time
    - Greet family members
  - Note and notebooks
    - Short, informal note
    - Specific accomplishment, new skill or interest
    - Most useful if used once a week
    - Not all families will enjoy this mode of communication
  - Bulletin board
    - Schedule of day
    - Sign-up sheets
    - Instructions for volunteers
    - Bright, cheerful, change frequently
    - Families can contribute to bulletin board (may want policy about what can go up)
    - \*\*See "Tips for Using Bulletin Boards" (page 50)
  - Newsletters
    - Intent and topics vary
    - Theme approach or school events, activities to do at home, announcements, requests for materials, community information, thank you to volunteers, children's section

# Family Participation

- Formal communication strategies
  - Home visits
    - Usually made two times a year
    - Chief purpose is to get acquainted with children and their families
    - Both teachers and families can feel intimidated
    - Remember: you are a guest there to enjoy and make a connection with the family
    - Schedule at family's convenience, let them know how long the visit will take
    - Be prompt and leave on time
    - Begin by discussing positives, even if it is to discuss concerns
    - Provide written information so family can review later
    - Don't do all the talking
    - Don't talk about the child in child's presence unless it is honest encouragement

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- During first home visit, make it clear that family participation is part of a successful program
  - Have family complete a written participation plan (page 77)
  - Explain the many opportunities families have to participate in the program
- Benefits for families who participate in the class
  - Develop a sense of ownership for the program
  - Learn to view their child in relationship to others
  - Understand more about child development
  - Grow to know and respect the teaching team
  - Learn activities that are fun to do at home
  - Meet their child's playmates and friends
  - Develop long-lasting friendships with other parents
  - Able to reinforce learning at home
- Suggested opportunities for family participation (page 77)

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Benefits for the teaching team
  - Spend more time with individual children and work in smaller groups
  - Learn how parents motivate their children
  - See how family members help their children solve problems
  - Learn more about diverse cultural practices
  - Learn about special skills and hobbies family members can share (cooking, musical instrument)

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Welcoming families to the class
  - All communications with families should convey that parents are the experts about their children
  - Respect and open communication regarding policies, procedures, goals, and activities help to make everyone feel part of the program
- Parents may be reluctant to participate because:
  - They aren't sure the teaching team really wants their help
  - They are afraid they might make a mistake
  - They don't know what to do and don't want to cause confusion
  - They don't feel they have anything to offer
  - The rules of the classroom are unclear
- No set amount of time that families need to sign up for
- Any amount of involvement is welcome

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Introduction to the classroom
  - First family meeting in the classroom
  - Families go through the entire day's schedule as if they were the children
    - Work with the materials and play games
    - Shortened version
    - Each center clearly marked with a short explanation of what children learn in that area (sample on page 57)
    - Meeting allows teachers to explain ways for parents to assist in the class
    - Parents provided classroom rules, post on bulletin board
      - Discipline
      - Clean up
      - Toileting
      - Health and safety

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Instructions for Activities
  - When parents arrive, it should be clear what they can do that day and how to be successful doing it
    - Note for Participating Family Member (page 59)
  - Post general information on ongoing activities in specific areas at all times (page 56)
  - Guidelines for working in classroom posted (page 60)
    - Storing materials
    - Discipline (parents should not be involved)
    - Daily schedule
- Family participation outside the classroom
  - Donate materials
  - Attend meetings
  - Build equipment, clean up outdoor
  - Bring book to read (survey book first)
- Show appreciation for parents both in and outside classroom (page 61)
  - Verbally thank
  - Recognition

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Getting men involved
  - Home visits with both parents
  - Schedule meetings with both parents in mind
  - Address correspondence to both parents
  - Both signatures of parents on reports
  - Plan special events oriented towards men (get their input on what would interest them)
  - Encourage two fathers to come together to meetings
  - Plan “men only” social events for fathers to exchange ideas and talk about their children
  - Offer parenting classes just for men (preferably led by a man) or couples
  - Sponsor family nights
  - Designate a morning when fathers and other men are invited to classroom before work
  - Sponsor family evenings, weekend events, “share” suppers

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Family meetings and gatherings
  - Instructional meeting (informative workshop)
    - Outside speaker
    - Conduct interest survey to include parents in decisions of who to bring in
  - Formal child development instruction
  - Family advisory committee meeting
    - Quarterly
    - Solicit information and ideas from family
    - Topics:
      - Encouraging family participation
      - Parent-teacher conferences
      - Community involvement
      - Social events
    - Fund-raising: REMEMBER! Have a goal in mind; don't just raise funds
  - Informal meetings
  - Support groups
  - Choosing topics for family meetings
    - Interest checklist (page 67)
    - Techniques for guiding children (versus "managing behaviors")
    - Childhood nutrition and health

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- How to Hold a Successful Meeting
  - Send personal invitations
  - Encourage active participation
  - Meeting in comfortable, friendly environment
    - Candles
    - Tablecloths
    - Flowers
  - Provide child care
  - Circle chairs
  - Use visual aids (in all languages of families)
  - Use technology (perhaps a parent can help you!)
  - Allow time for families to talk
  - FOOD!
  - Pair involved parent with uninvolved parent
  - Keep presentations short
  - Be playful in presentations
  - Evaluate meeting (page 73)

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Family room
  - Comfortable and inviting
  - Children's art on walls
  - Appropriate toys for siblings
- Lending library
  - Books and toys to borrow
  - Sign-up sheet or cards
  - Two- or three-week loan period
  - Adult books (parenting, special interests, child development)

# Family Participation

## Families in the Classroom

- Discover family interests (page 66)
- Determine family interest (staff review form page 68)
- Plan events
  - Think of scheduling around busy lives
- Activities to promote family participation
  - Hiking
  - Sing-alongs
  - Ice skating/roller skating
  - Fishing
  - Building/improving playground
  - Gardening
  - Kite festival
- Clubs/classes
  - Sewing, art, exercise
  - Fix-it
  - Secret pals
  - Big Brother/Big Sister

# Family Participation

## Confidentiality

- Keep information confidential about children
- Keep information confidential about families
  - EVEN IF THEIR RELATIVE IS IN THE PROGRAM
  - EVEN IF THEIR RELATIVE HELPS TRANSPORT CHILDREN
  - EVEN IF ANOTHER PARENT IS A REGULAR VOLUNTEER
- Review confidentiality at least once a year
- Develop a written confidentiality policy
  - Process of releasing information to community agencies or individuals
  - How program will use confidential information
  - Training and procedures for ensuring objective recording and reporting information
  - Parent's rights
  - Disciplinary action taken for violations
  - Procedures for staff and parent training