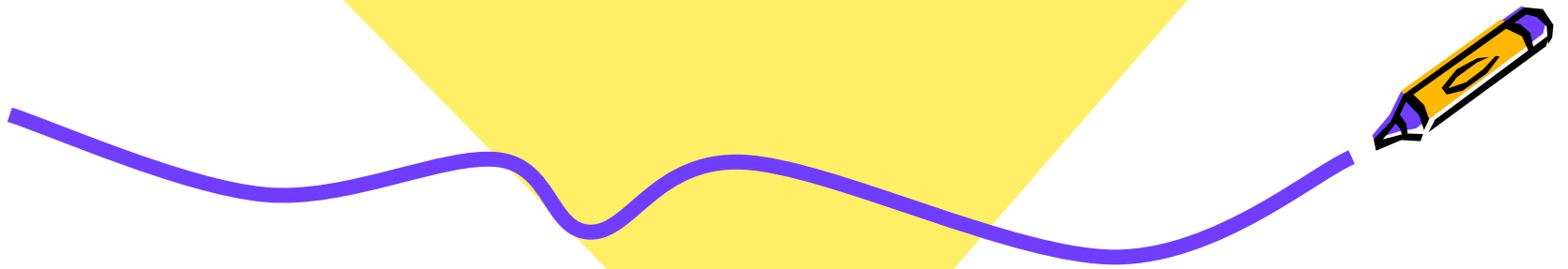


# Unit 5

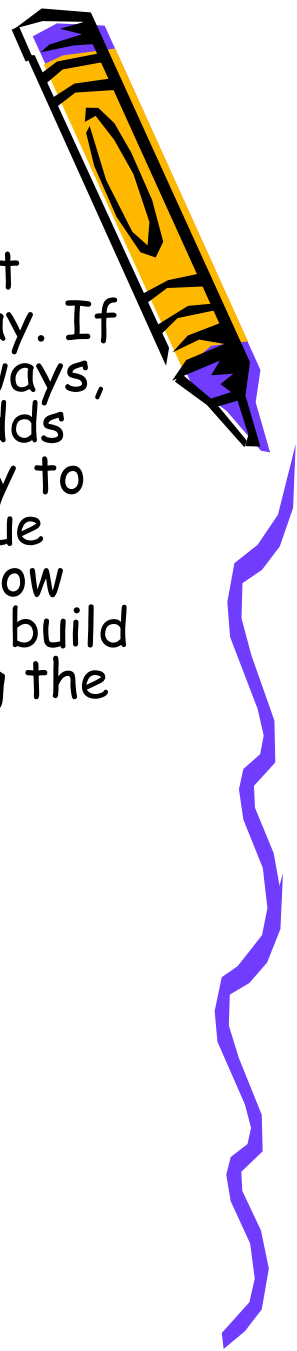
## The Family's Role



# Introduction

Home and school are a young child's two most important worlds. Children must bridge these two worlds every day. If home and school are connected in positive, respectful ways, children feel secure. But when the two worlds are at odds because of apathy, lack of understanding, or an inability to work together, children suffer. Teachers who truly value the family's role in a child's education, and recognize how much they can accomplish by working with families, can build a true partnership. This unit will help you by addressing the following topics:

- Getting to know families
- Making families feel welcome
- Communicating with families
- Partnering with families on children's learning
- Responding to challenging situations



# Activity 1: True Confessions

The purpose of this activity is to help you identify, in a playful way, how you feel about your work with families.

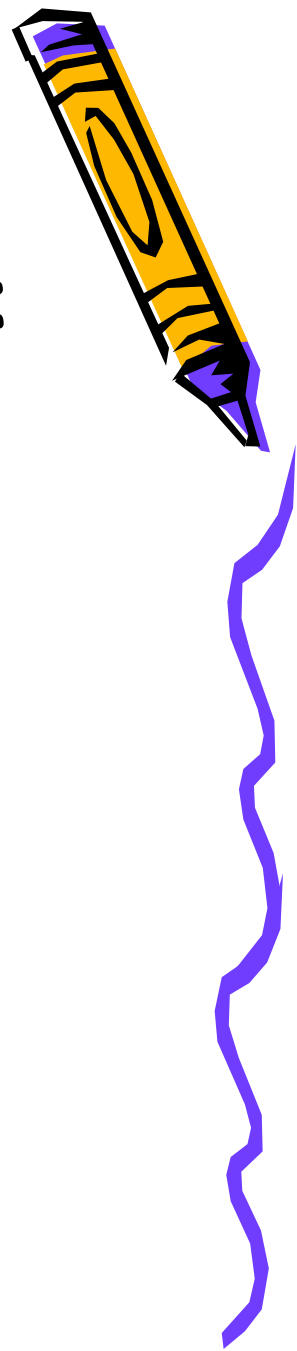




- Everyone feels a different level of competence and comfort when working with families.
- I'm going to make a series of statements. Then I'll give you four possible answers, and designate one corner of the room for each answer.
- Move to the corner of the room that best represents how you would respond.
- Talk amongst yourselves about why you chose that response.



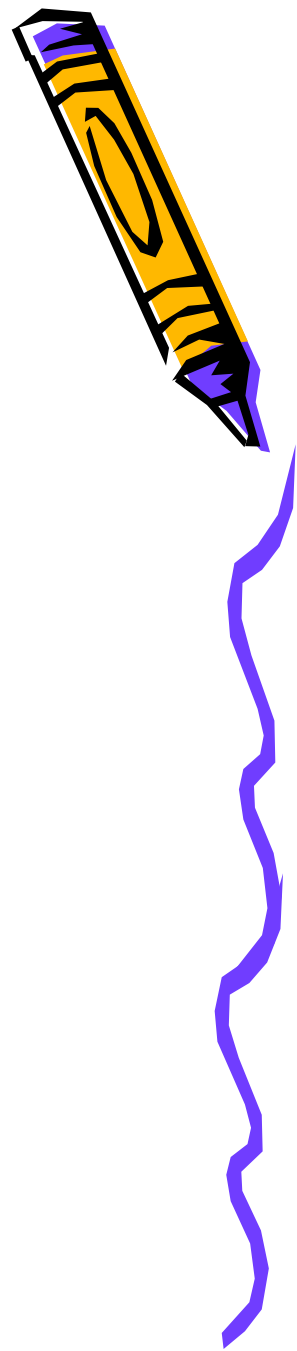
Statement 1: When it comes to working with families, I am like a:



- Ship
- Bicycle
- Helium balloon
- Runaway train



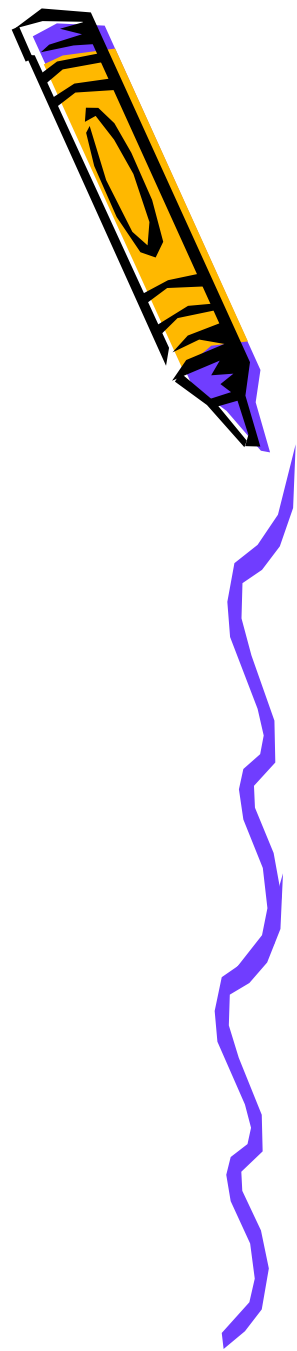
Statement 2: If I were to describe how I relate to families, I would say I'm like a:



- Pit bull
- Cocker spaniel
- Chihuahua
- Basset hound



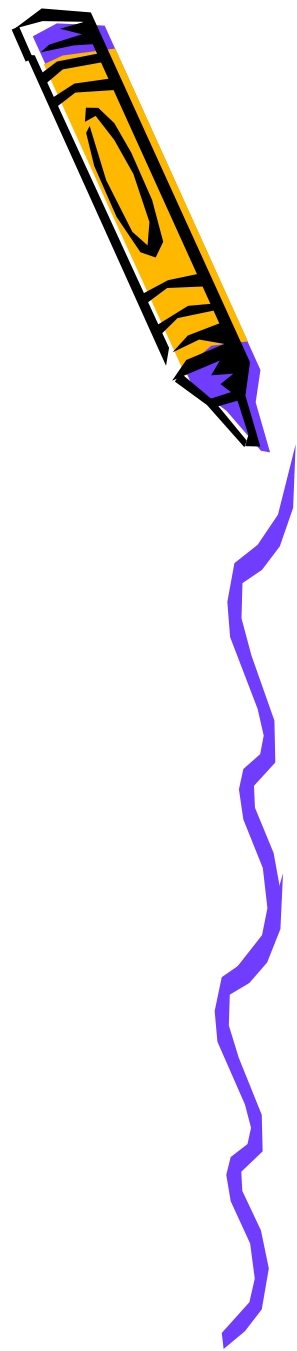
Statement 3: When parents are in my classroom, I feel like I'm:



- At a symphony concert
- In a storm at sea
- In a mystery novel
- At the zoo



Statement 4:  
When it comes to handling  
conflicts with parents, I'm:



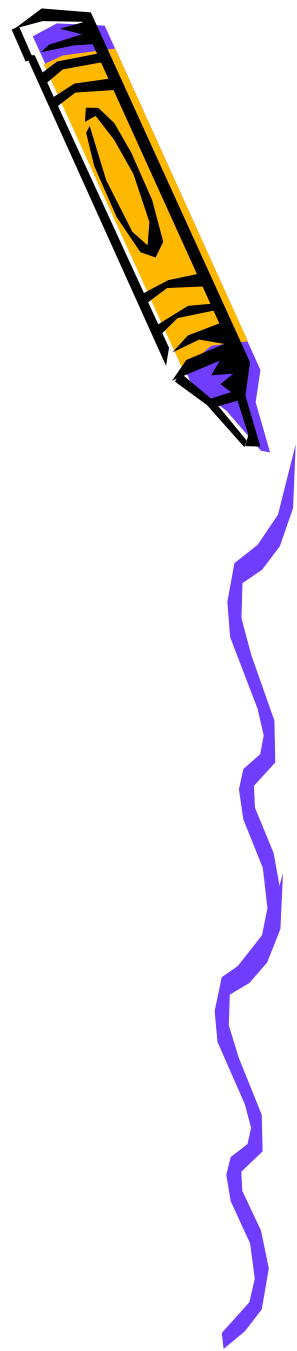
- A fish out of water
- An ostrich
- A beaver
- A butterfly



## Statement 5:

The tool I need most to help me work with families is a:

- Hammer
- Wrench
- Plunger
- Glue gun

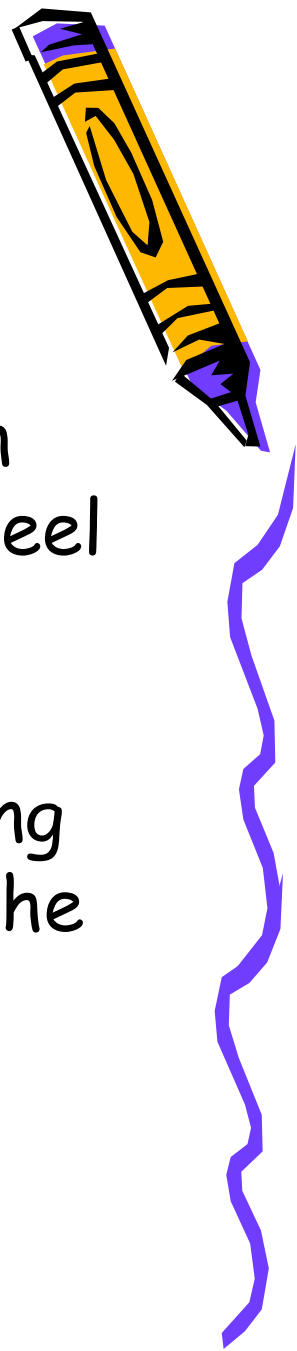




- What insights did you gain from this activity?
- Each of us has feelings about our work with families. The information offered in the Curriculum may help address some of the concerns you have.



# Summary

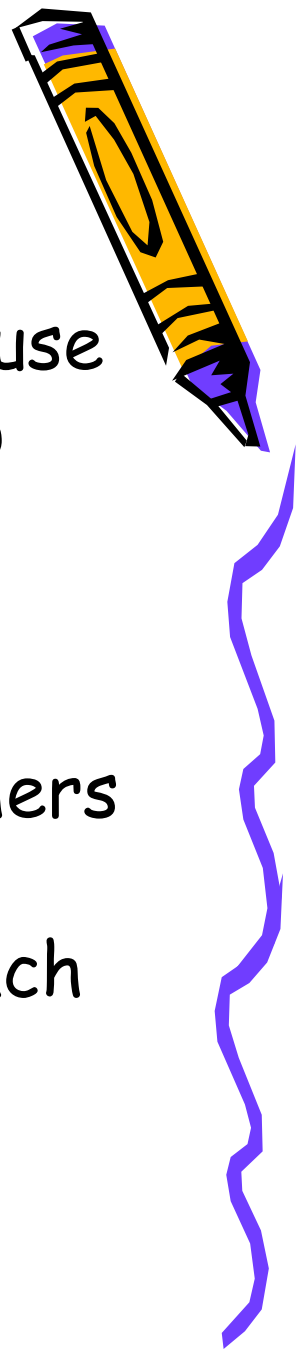


- When home and school are connected in positive and respectful ways, children feel secure and much can be accomplished.
- It is important for teachers to acknowledge how they feel about working with families to allow them to develop the skills they need to build effective relationships.



# Appreciating Differences

Just as you get to know each child and use what you learn to develop a relationship that helps every child learn, you begin building a partnership with families by getting to know and appreciate each family. Every family is different. Teachers must vary the ways in which they communicate and involve families to reach every family.

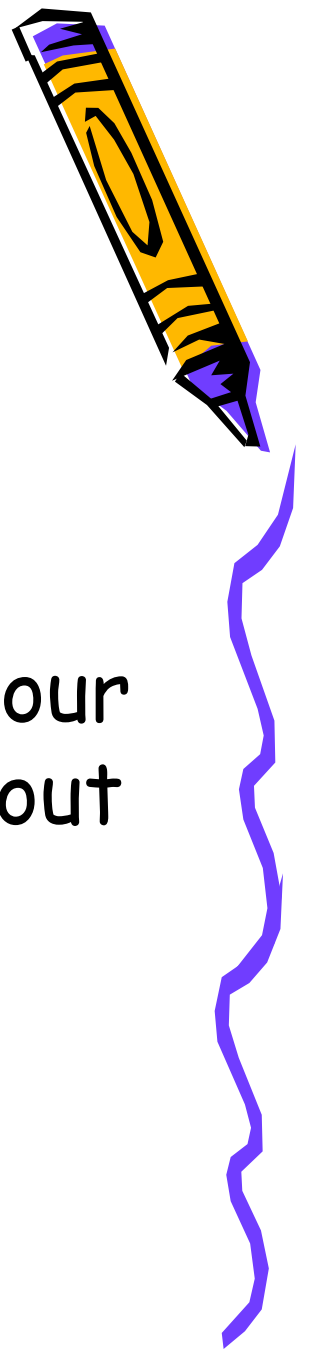


# Families vary in:

- Structure, with different configurations of adults caring for children.
- Personality and temperament, with different comfort levels in relating to their child's school.
- Life experiences, including level of education, socio-economic status, immigrant status, to name a few.
- Cultural differences, with different beliefs, values and practices.



# Gaining Self-Awareness



- page 213
- Think about the questions.
- Address the connection between your experience and what you notice about families in your program currently.





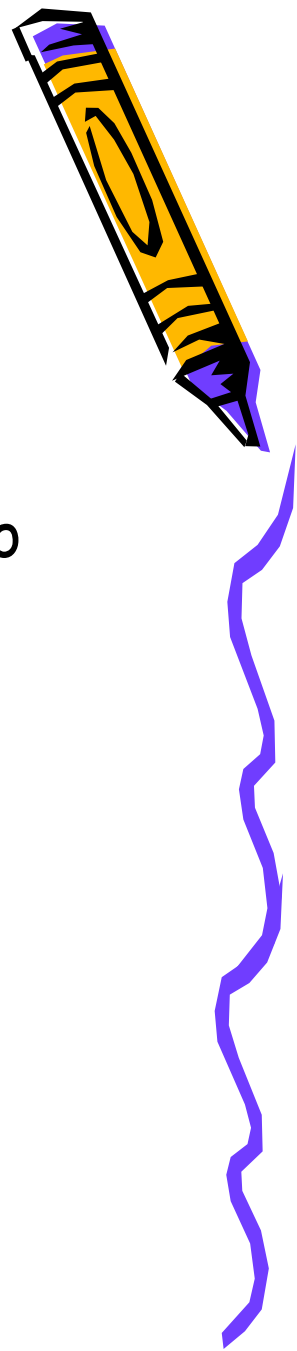
- Thinking about your own personal experiences and how they influence your thinking and actions will help in appreciating how families respond as they do.
- It is very important to remember the limits that using labels imposes on our thinking about others; labels only perpetuate stereotypes and are often inaccurate. It is far better to learn as much as you can about and from the families in your program than to depend on group stereotypes that may be entirely wrong.



# Activity 2 — How Well Do You Know Your Families?

The purpose of this activity is to think about getting to know families in your program.





- Separate into small groups.
- Complete the following two sentences:
- "What I appreciate most about families is..."
- "The most successful thing I've done to get to know families is..."
- Briefly discuss the way you finished each sentence with your group.
- Each group will then share a few successful strategies for getting to know families. Write down the ideas that you would like to try.



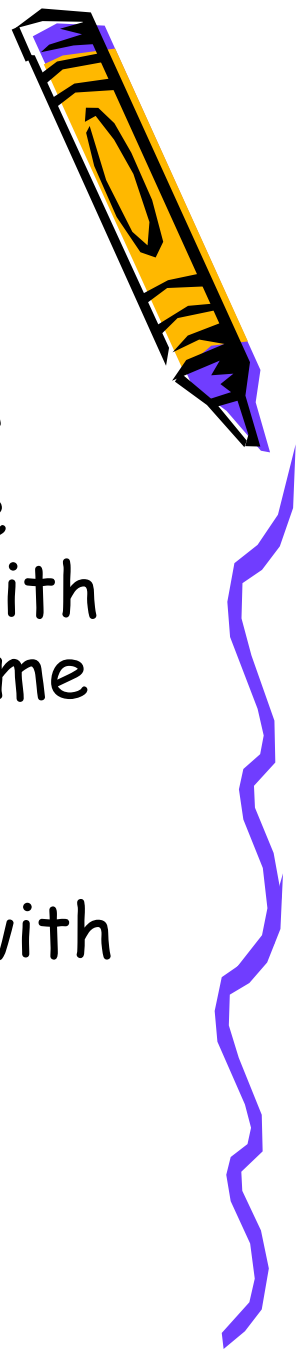
# Summary



- Knowing children means knowing families.
- Every family is different.
- Knowing and appreciating what is unique or different about each family helps you to build relationships and support children's learning and development.



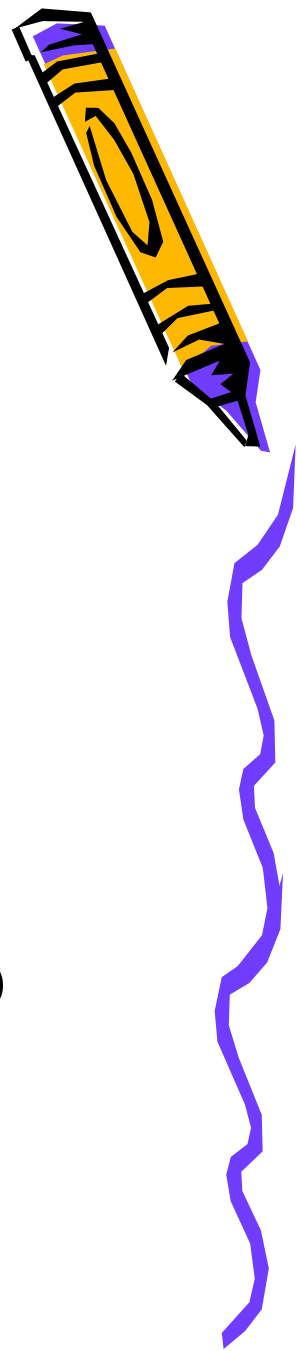
# Using Initial Contacts to Learn About Families



- Initial contacts with children's families are opportunities to get to know a little about each one. Some programs start with enrollment at the school, others use home visits.
- Pages 214 – 217 has information about making the most of the initial contact with families to get to know them and to introduce yourself.

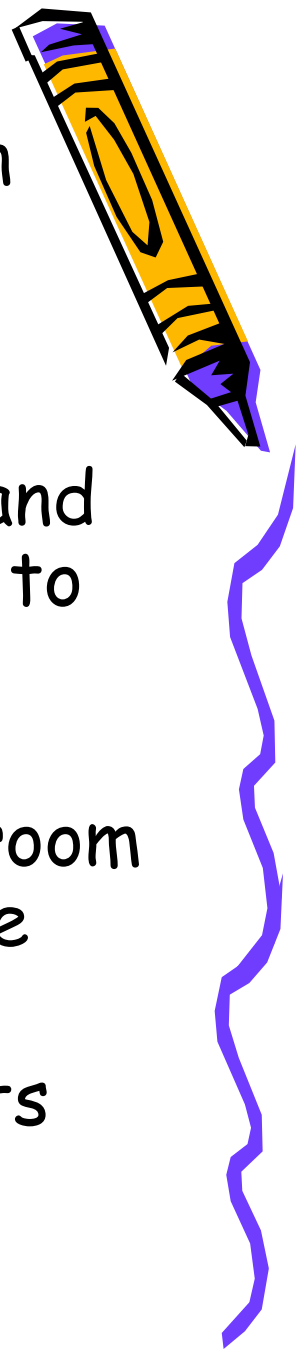


# Making Families Feel Welcome



- Activity 3 - Making Families Feel Welcome
- The purpose of this activity is to consider how to convey positive messages to families to help them feel they belong and have a role to play.





- All families come to school with certain feelings and expectations—positive, negative and neutral.
- Family members who have had positive, respectful experiences with teachers and schools develop trust that allows them to feel comfortable and welcome in the school.
- Families who feel welcome in the classroom are more likely to return and to become involved in the program.
- Think of needs or concerns that parents might have about a preschool program.

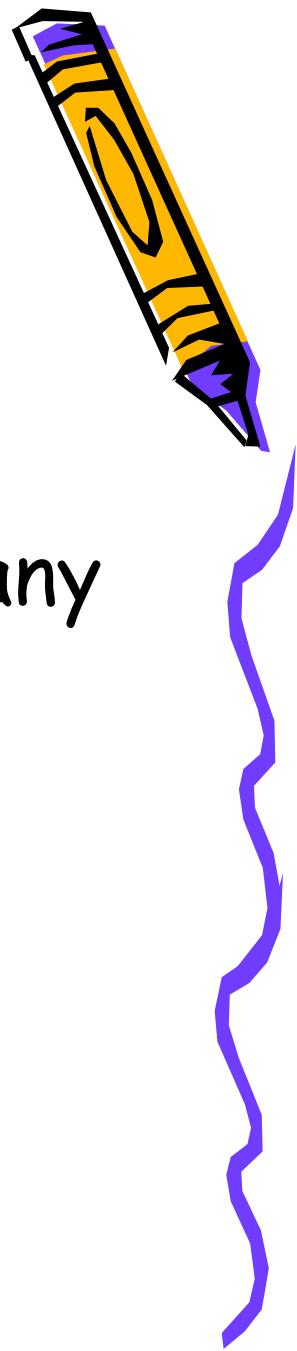


# Conveying Positive Messages to Families

This activity will help you think about preparing your environment, introducing your program, and reaching out to family members in order to build trusting relationships.



- Respond to the message listed.
- Look over pages 218 – 222 to compare your ideas and to record any new ideas you would like to try.
- Share.



# Summary

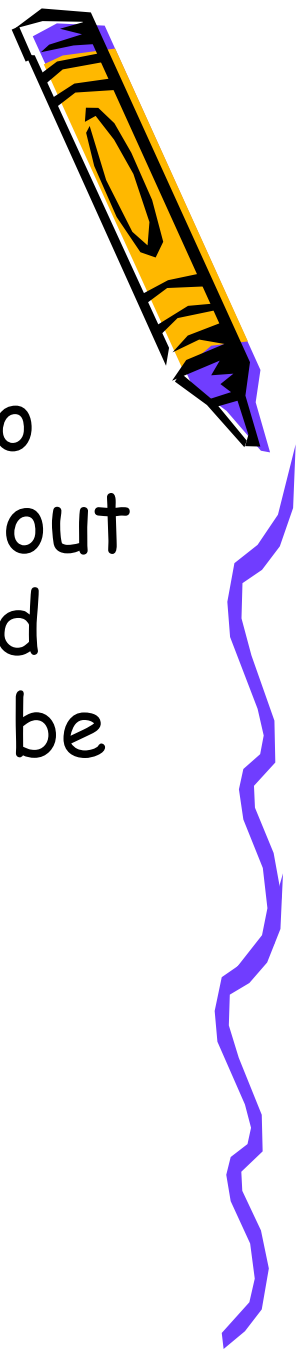


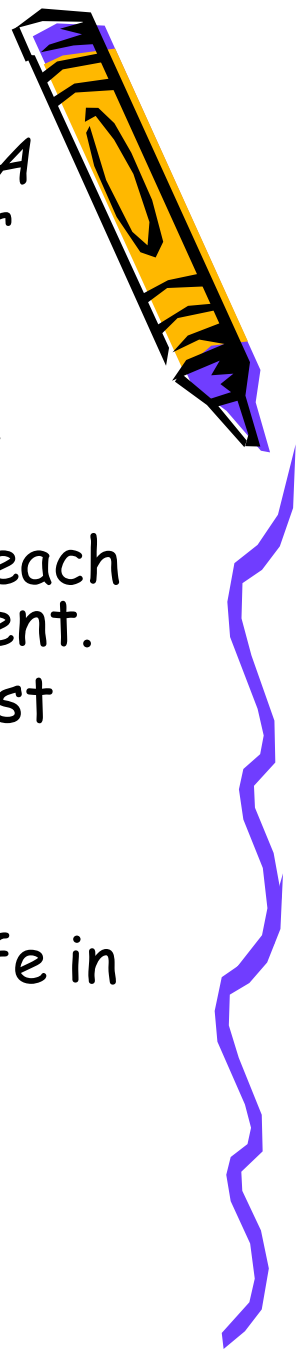
- Positive messages help build trust between teachers and families. They make families feel they are welcome in the preschool program and that they have a role to play.
- Trust between teachers and families grow when teachers meet families' needs and respond to them in positive, respectful ways.
- Take time to assess whether your environment conveys the messages you intend. Let families know their ideas and contributions are always welcome.



# Introducing Your Program

- When children first enter your program, their parents are likely to be especially interested in finding out what their child will be learning and what each day will be like. You can be prepared to meet this interest by making available as many of the following as possible:

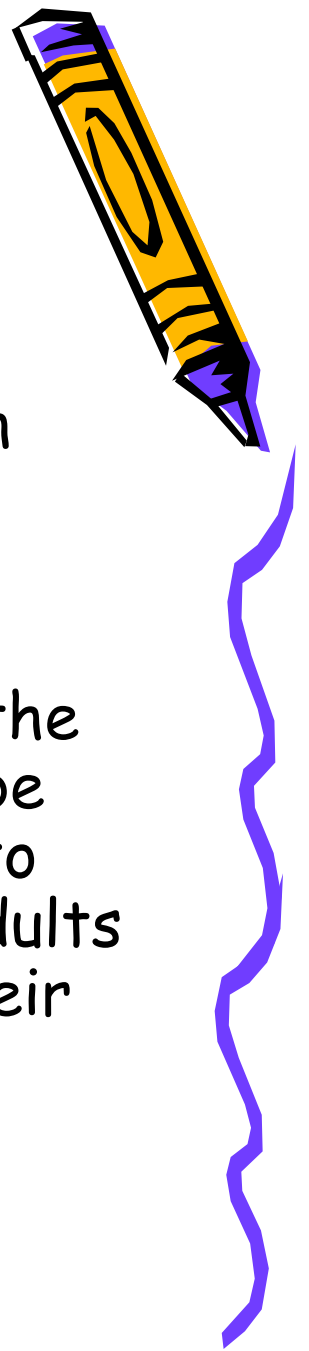




- Provide a **booklet**, like *Creative Curriculum's A Parent's Guide to Preschool Education*, or your program's own booklet.
- Take families and children on a **tour of the classroom**, introducing interest areas and the daily schedule.
- Hold an **open house** to allow families to meet each other and experience the classroom environment.
- Send the **Letter To Families** for each Interest Area provided in the Participant Guide (for an example, point out page 269 to participants).
- Create a **display** at the entrance to your classroom with pictures and descriptions of life in your classroom.



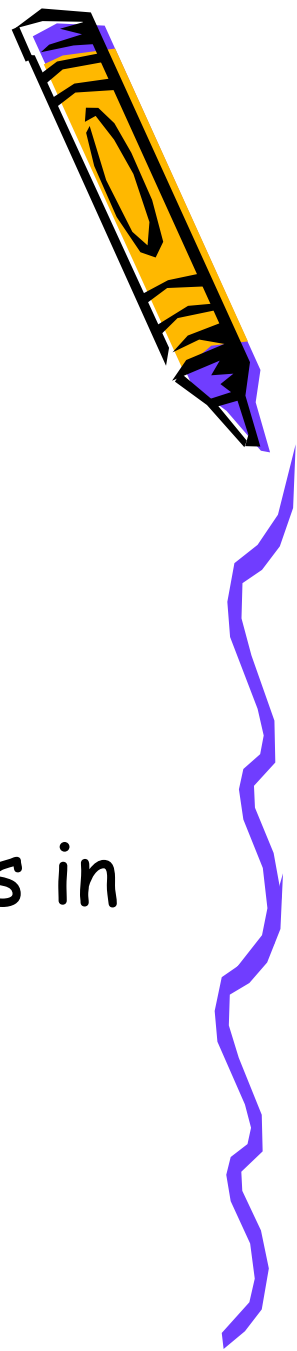
# Involving Families



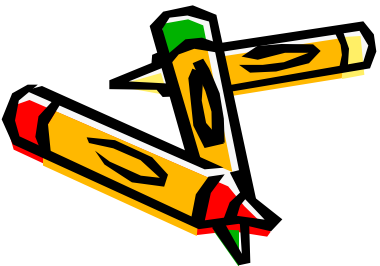
- Keep in mind that these are the initial steps in building trust with families. This is an ongoing process, which continues throughout the year.
- Parents are not the only family members who should feel welcome in your classroom. All of the adults who are important in a child's life can be involved in the program. The important thing to keep in mind is that all children need caring adults in their lives who take an active interest in their learning.



# Communicating with Families



- Communicating Effectively with Families
- The purpose of this activity is to examine the essential elements of communication and the role it plays in establishing and maintaining relationships with families.



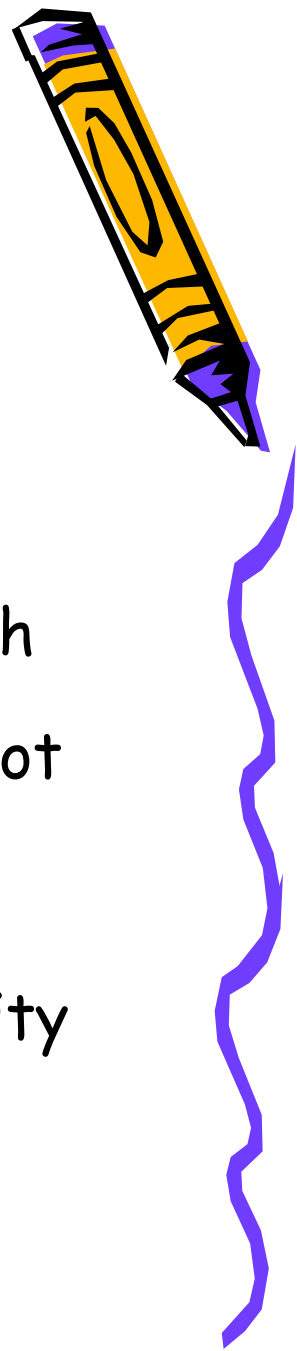
# Introduce the activity:



- Families and teachers have much information to share.
- Regular, positive communication helps families stay informed about what their child is learning and what you have learned about their child.
- When children observe respectful and genuine interactions between their families and teachers, they see that their two worlds—home and school—are connected.



# Procedures:

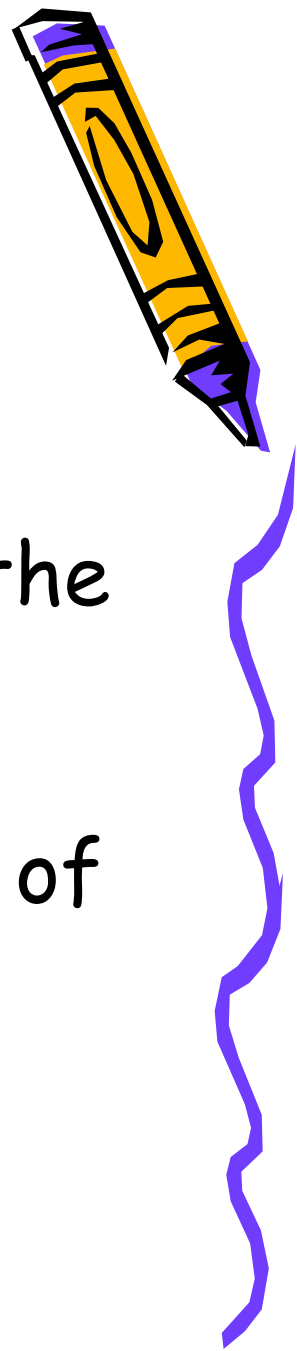


- A volunteer will step out of the room while an object is hidden from view.
- The volunteer will leave now.
- Those of you remaining will "communicate" with the volunteer about the location of the hidden object, by snapping your fingers (but not saying anything).
- Slow/soft communication indicates a greater distance from the object, while an increase in the pace and volume indicates a closer proximity to the object.



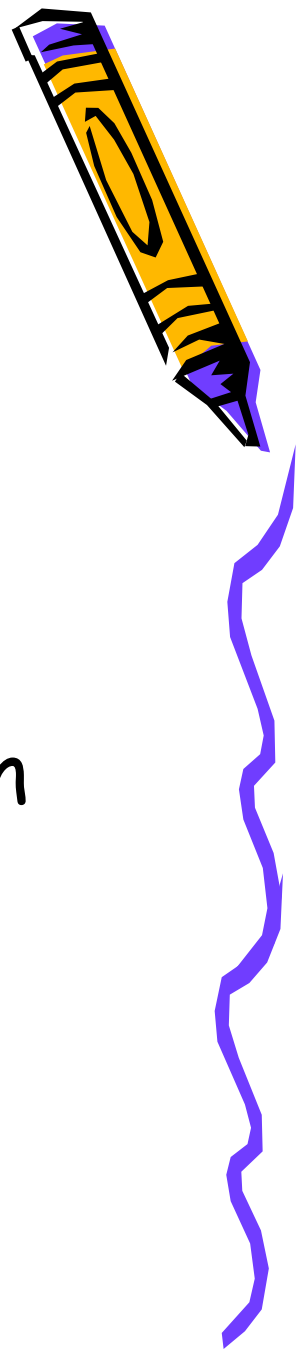
After the volunteer finds the object, discuss the activity:

- How did the volunteer feel the communication worked to achieve the goal?
- What were the essential elements of communication participants saw through the activity?

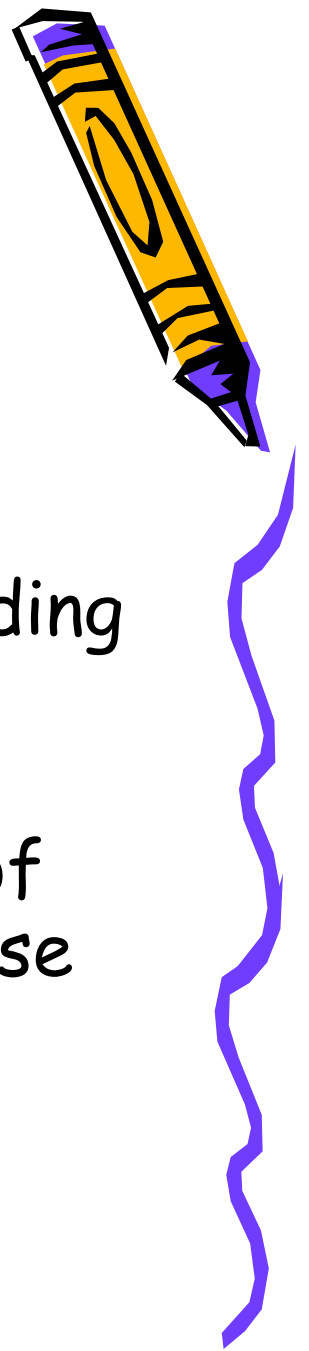


# Communication

- Communicating with families is a means of building and maintaining relationships.
- What is the influence of culture on communication styles and subject matter?



# Summary



- Both teachers and families have much information to share.
- Good communication is essential to building relationships with families.
- It is important to communicate in ways that meet the needs and ability levels of family members, particularly those whose primary language is not English.



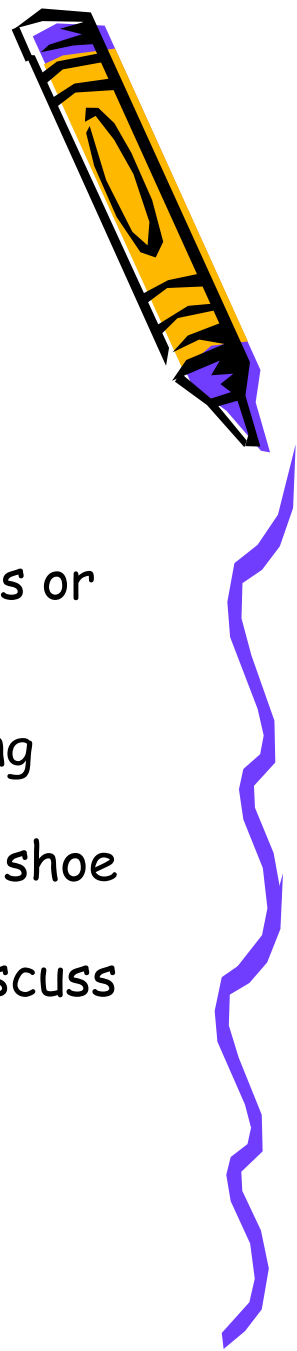
# Partnering with Families on Children's Learning



- Offering a Variety of Ways to Be Involved
  - Parents have been teaching their children since birth—you are partnering with them in supporting their child's learning. To partner effectively with parents you need to get them involved. Given the demands of diverse work schedules, teachers need to think creatively about making opportunities for involvement available to all parents. Involvement can take many forms—from volunteering in the classroom to simply sharing information on children's progress.



From the beginning, welcome family involvement. Some ideas on ways for families to be involved include:



- **Making things for the program:** collecting scraps of fabric, buttons, etc. that all children in the program can use;
- **Sharing their culture:** lending art objects, taping songs or stories, and helping teachers to understand beliefs and practices;
- **Sharing a talent or job:** playing an instrument, bringing special tools to show, preparing a garden;
- **Participating in a study:** contributing old shoes for a "shoe store" study; and
- **Contributing to the curriculum:** joining meetings to discuss ideas to improve the program.



# Making Classroom Participation Meaningful

Some families will be able to participate in your daily program. Doing so enables them to see firsthand how you work with children and promote learning. Express to parents that they are not expected to be teachers, but provide them with some tools to help them contribute effectively to the classroom. Invite participants to reference pages 228 — 231 for ideas on how to support family participation in your classroom.



# Activity 5 - Sharing the Curriculum with Families and Others

The purpose of this activity is to help teachers anticipate ways to clarify their program to parents so they can participate effectively.



# Introduce the activity:



- Families feel more comfortable leaving their children in a preschool program where they are informed about the structure of the classroom day and the kinds of experiences children will be offered.
- Parents also want to be assured that their children are learning.
- When teachers are able to describe what children are learning and their approaches to teaching children, they are more likely to gain support from families and others.
- How many of you have heard, or said, that "children learn through play?"
- Does this statement capture all of the learning that occurs in an active classroom?
- It is very important to be able to explain to families and others "what" and "how" children learn through play.



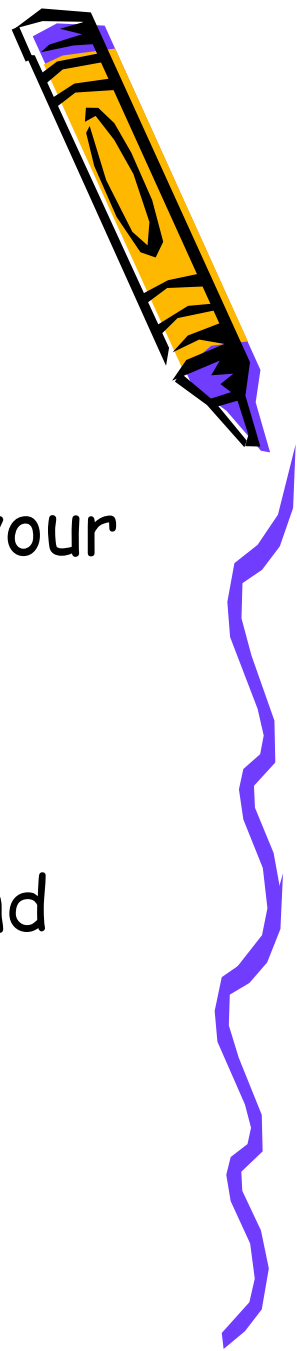
# Activity



- Each table will role-play a panel of early childhood experts answering parent questions from the audience.
- Make up a question a parent might ask.
- Discuss the answer and report to the group.



# Summary



- As professionals, you should be able to explain what children are learning and your approaches to teaching.
- Keeping families and others informed about your program practices and activities helps to build partnerships and gain support for your program.



# Responding to Challenging Situations



- Resolving Differences Constructively
- The purpose of this activity is to give you an opportunity to practice resolving a conflict using a four-step process.



# *Introduce the activity*



- Some differences are hard to reconcile because they conflict with your program's philosophy and your own strong beliefs.
- *The Creative Curriculum*® outlines a four-step process for helping you resolve these kinds of differences constructively.



# Resolving Differences Constructively



- Read pages 239 – 240.
- Discussion about each step.
- Work with a group.
  - Determine who will be the parent and who will be the teacher.
  - The group will choose how to role play the scenario to the class without resolution and then with a resolution.
  - Use the suggested steps to resolve the difference.
- Comments and questions.



# Summary



- Some differences can be resolved through compromise while others must be addressed directly.
- Listen to parents, validate their concerns, and wishes, explain how you will address them, and assure them you will follow-up with them on the issue.
- In doing so, you can gain their trust and respect without violating any values, goals or principles of your program.



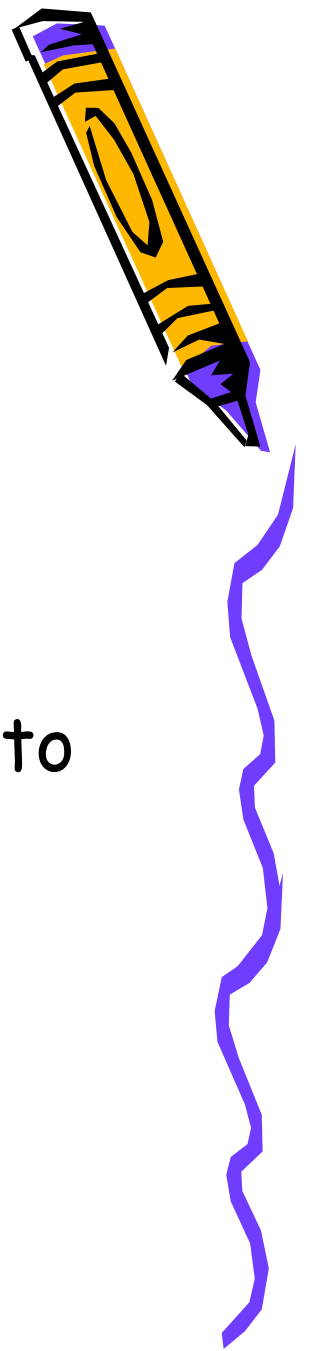
# Final Thoughts



- We need to acknowledge how we feel about working with families in our classrooms so we can do our best with parents.
- Getting to know families is as important as getting to know children.
- Knowing a variety of communication approaches will help teachers reach and include all families in their classrooms.
- Teachers can invite families' partnership by providing many opportunities to participate in the classroom.
- Challenging situations will come up, but practice in the four-step process of resolving misunderstandings will prepare teachers for working through these times.



# Group Project



- Choose one Content Area: Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies
- List Creative Curriculum Objectives addressed
- Describe implementation and activities to address CC objectives
- Provide a brief description to parents/guardians and at least five enhancement activities to do at home.

