

Family Engagement Activities that Promote Children's Development & Learning

General

- Invite families to an open house at your school. The teachers set up activities intended for the children, show the linkage to learning standards, and talk about what the children gain from doing these types of activity. Give parents a tour of the classroom and highlight skills children learn in each center while discussing the importance of play for children.
- Have a concert on the lawn and invite someone to perform for the families and teach about music and interaction/social emotional development. Or ask musical parents to perform for the other families. This is a great way to celebrate families and culture while learning about the benefits of including music in children's lives.
- For children who are overwhelmed with Fall carnivals and other large gatherings, incorporate sensory stations so that the children have a calming place to go, and the parents can learn about the importance of sensory play. Give parents ideas on how to make sensory tables at home using common materials like shallow bins, rice and toys the children already have at home like plastic animals.
- Host a mommy/daddy and me Tummy Time event. Use this time to educate parents on the importance of tummy time for baby's development.
- Invite parents to volunteer in the classroom. Use the experience as an opportunity to educate parents on developmentally appropriate practice. Show the parents how your classroom is designed to promote learning in every center and discuss what the children learn by playing with toys and materials.

Take Home Activities

- Send home an activity about taking random household items and turning them into developmentally appropriate games for children. A Kleenex box can become a hide and seek box, and a shoe box can be a rice sensory table, etc.
- Create a closed Facebook page to not only post updates but also articles and ideas for parents. This is a great resource to get parents involved.
- Include classroom newsletters for a take home extension activity for how parents can build on the lessons from that week. Encourage families to send in pictures of them working on these activities.

Art

- Host a Family Art Night where children work on art projects every month over a specified number of months. For example, one project a month for four months the art project can be theme or subject related or it can be unrelated to what the children are working on in the classroom. That month, at the end of the time frame, parents would be invited to attend a family art night at the school. This event children and their families would have the opportunity to view the projects and discuss skills the children used to create the artwork.

Science

- Set up classrooms with steam science activities and invite the parents to attend activities. This could include making tall structures with packing peanuts and toothpicks, ramps made from wrapping paper tubes cut in half, color mixing painting, making a structure as tall as you can with a set of 25 solo cups then measure to see how tall etc. You could also make imaginary insects with a variety of art supplies and recycled materials. The ideas are endless! For each activity, parents will be given a card with directions and ideas and questions to ask the children as they work on them.
- Invite the parents to plant a garden at your program. It could be a pollinator garden or a garden for fruits and vegetables for the families to take home. Include books and some activities centered on gardening and its importance.
- Host a family picnic at the park and educate parents of the benefits of healthy eating and gross motor skills. Invite parents to experience what gross motor activities their children experience each day. Include activities parents can try at home with their children, like a simple scavenger hunt.
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Literacy

- Hold a reading under the stars event that provides a short book reading lesson to the parents. Allow the parents to read to the children under the stars on blankets. Other ideas would be to offer a Scholastic Book Fair on this night or send home free books with the children.
- Have one of the Public Library locations come out for a group reading activity and craft to go along with one of the books. This is a great time for the library to share their literacy resources with the families.

- Work with the local library to plan a read-a-thon with the family. Plan appropriate goals for the family based on development to teach/model to the children and how to support literacy at home.
- For a family literacy night have each classroom choose one book, usually a popular children's book, to focus on that evening. The teachers can be given the option to dress up as characters from the book. Using that book, the teachers will create some type of literacy activity, art activity or game that the children and family can do together
- Provide a lending library full of parenting resources that help parents understand how children should be developing and learning

Math

- Host a math make and take event where each classroom is asked to choose one math activity to teach to the children and their families during the event, The math activity must be something that can be turned into a make and take project and teachers are asked to also include the directions so that families can use them at home. The children and their families will visit each classroom group where they will receive direct instruction on math activity as well as have time to do the activity with their child.

Screening and Assessments

- Host a family teacher conference to review children's screening and assessment information. Use the conference as an opportunity to promote continuous growth and development, building on each child's unique needs. Educate the parents on child development and ways teachers promote early learning standards in the classroom. Provide activities parents can do at home to help promote their child's development. For example, increasing tummy time for their infants, having toddlers match socks to help with laundry, having preschool children help choose nutritious foods at the grocery and inviting school age children to prepare a nutritious snack for the family.

Family and Teacher Education

- Invite specialists from the field to provide training for families and teachers. For example, early childhood and mental health specialist may provide free training on Connect the Dots. Connect the Dots is a concise yet high impact skills-based training for early education professionals on how to address challenging behaviors through learning the basics of social and emotional best practices.