

THE KENTUCKY FAMILY AND EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP GUIDE:

A complete resource guide for strengthening family, early childhood programs and community partnerships to support children's success.

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

Brain research shows that over 90% of a child's brain is developed before age six. When adults talk to, read to, sing to and listen to a young child, that child's brain builds new brain connections essential for success in both school and life. Your work with young children impacts their lives in immeasurable ways. Your work with the families of young children strengthens the education of young children and improves positive family outcomes. **Thank you for your important and valued work.**

Families are their child's first and best teacher. This Family Partnership Guide is written to inspire and equip you to develop powerful partnerships with the families of the children you serve. The research is clear, when we believe all families love their children and have much to share with us, we find ways to learn about hopes for their child and the strengths the family brings to the program. When we have a trusting relationship, families are more likely to work with their child at home and when families and staff work together, every child does better.

The K-12 schools are counting on you, as early childhood programs, to set the foundation for trusting relationships and set high expectations for family partnership. If the first experience in education leaves families thinking "I'm only to come to the school if they ask me or need me" then we create a deficit relationship where families are involved primarily when their child is in trouble or the school needs something. Instead, early educators have the opportunity to invite families to the table as co-creators and co-leaders in their child's education.

All early childhood programs have strengths and areas of growth. We are all somewhere on the journey. Let's keep going.

In Partnership,

Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools



Dear Early Childhood Educator,

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood is excited to partner on the Early Childhood Guide and Playbook that will help ensure that every child in the Commonwealth has a strong start in school and in life.

Early childhood educators play a critical role in engaging families in their children's education. As research clearly shows, children do better academically and socially, as well as graduate on time, when families are engaged with their children's education. (Henderson & Mapp 2002).

Our goal is to help families become accustomed to seeing themselves as equal partners with teaching staff, understanding that we want to share in their hopes and dreams for their children, and helping them nurture their children's unique gifts while overcoming challenges in their children's development both at home and school.

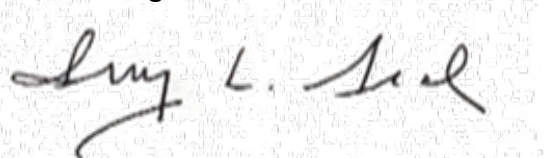
When families, early care, and education staff combine their strengths, children thrive and staff experience the satisfaction of making a real difference in the lives of the children. The Early Childhood Guide's self-assessment provides a comprehensive measure of an early childhood program's strengths and opportunities for building impactful relationships with families. The accompanying Family Engagement Digital Playbook is full of ideas and resources that build the essential components of family partnership that are measured in the self-assessment.

It is our sincerest hope that early childhood programs across the Commonwealth will use the self-assessment to get a clearer picture of their existing partnerships with their families and use the Playbook to enhance those partnerships. Children will win when we do.

We extend a warm thank you to the many people whose work was foundational in creating this Guide and Playbook, especially the staff of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, the Prichard Committee, the partners in Kentucky's Collaborative for Families and Schools, and the Commissioner's Parent Advisory Council. A special thank you to the Division of Child Care and the staff of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood for their leadership in promoting these tools to early childhood providers.

Finally, please accept our gratitude for the work you do daily to ensure that every child has high-quality experiences before they enter kindergarten.

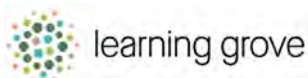
Kindest regards,



Amy Neal, Executive Director
Governor's Office Of Early Childhood



Brigitte Blom, CEO and President
The Prichard Committee



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Glossary: Setting the Stage with Common Language



Family Engagement: A productive, equitable and inclusive partnership among families, educators and the community to promote children's learning and development, and across home, early childhood program and community settings. Family, program and community partnerships are about building active, reciprocal relationships in which early childhood programs, families and community agencies and organizations engage in meaningful and culturally appropriate collaboration to improve child outcomes.

The use of "Parent" or "family": A natural, adoptive or foster parent or other adult serving as a parent such as a close relative, a legal or educational guardian; and/or a community or agency advocate.

Equity: The promotion of access, opportunity and advancement of all young children, including those in underserved communities, in order to identify and eliminate conditions that prevent the ability of all children to reach their full potential. "The term 'underserved communities' refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life," (*January 2021 President Biden's [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)*).

Inclusion: The intentional act of creating an environment that fosters mutually respectful relationships in

which each child and family, regardless of intellectual, social, cultural and geographic background, is welcomed and supported.

Equality: "Equality is the condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted the same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences, abilities or backgrounds" (University of Washington Department of Epidemiology Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Glossary of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Terms. 2019)

Early Education Program: We use this phrase to represent all home, center and school based early learning programs that serve children from birth until kindergarten. Other phrases commonly used are early Head Start, public preschool, childcare, family childcare, early learning, early care and education, preschool, and early childhood. For the purposes of this document and accompanying resources we always intend for the inclusion of all forms of early learning programs that serve Kentucky's earliest learners and those providers regardless of setting or operator.

The “Why” of Family Engagement: The Research

The best predictor of student success is the extent to which families encourage learning at home and involve themselves in their child’s education. Research suggests if early childhood programs and schools successfully engage families in education, their children, regardless of ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades or test scores
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Graduate from high school and attend post- secondary education
- Have better social skills and classroom behavior (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

What if schools and early learning programs added high-impact strategies for engaging families to other practices for improving learning?

Most common practices of family engagement, such as back-to-school nights, volunteer programs, and parent-teacher conferences focused on behavior sometimes termed “random acts of family engagement” - by themselves are low impact. Research strongly suggests that engaging families in the following ways can have a significant, sustained and positive impact on student learning:

- Building personal relationships, mutual understanding, and trust with families via class meetings, informal one-on-one conversations, and home visits
- Engaging parents in meaningful leadership and decision-making
- Sharing data with families about the child’s skill levels
- Modeling high-impact teaching practices such as dialogic reading and hands-on math activities so families can use them at home
- Listening to families’ ideas about their children’s interests and challenges, and using this input to differentiate instruction, incorporating content from families’ home cultures and histories into classroom lessons. (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies, 2007)



EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Several studies have found that integrating such family engagement practices into programs to improve instruction can accelerate and children's gains.

Early Education Example:

- This long-term, quantitative study of the Chicago Parent Centers (children ages 3-9) documents a significant, even dramatic, positive relationship between parent engagement and social and academic outcomes for low-income children. The longer parents took part in the program, and the more they were involved at the program, the more likely their children were to complete high school, and the less likely they were to repeat a grade, be arrested, or require special education. [Click here for full research brief "Early Education Example: Parental Involvement and Children's Success"](#)

English Language Learners Example:

- This quasi-experimental study evaluated the impact of FASTalk, a school-home text-messaging program designed to improve English Language learning. During the 2017-2018 school year, teachers in 11 predominantly Latinx kindergarten and transition kindergarten classes in Oakland, California, sent parents text messages

3x weekly with tips and activities. After seven months, FASTalk students made between .5 and 1.1 months of additional growth, compared to students in a matched group whose families did not participate. Students whose home language was different from their teacher's made even greater gains. [Click here for full research brief "ELL Example: FASTalk"](#)

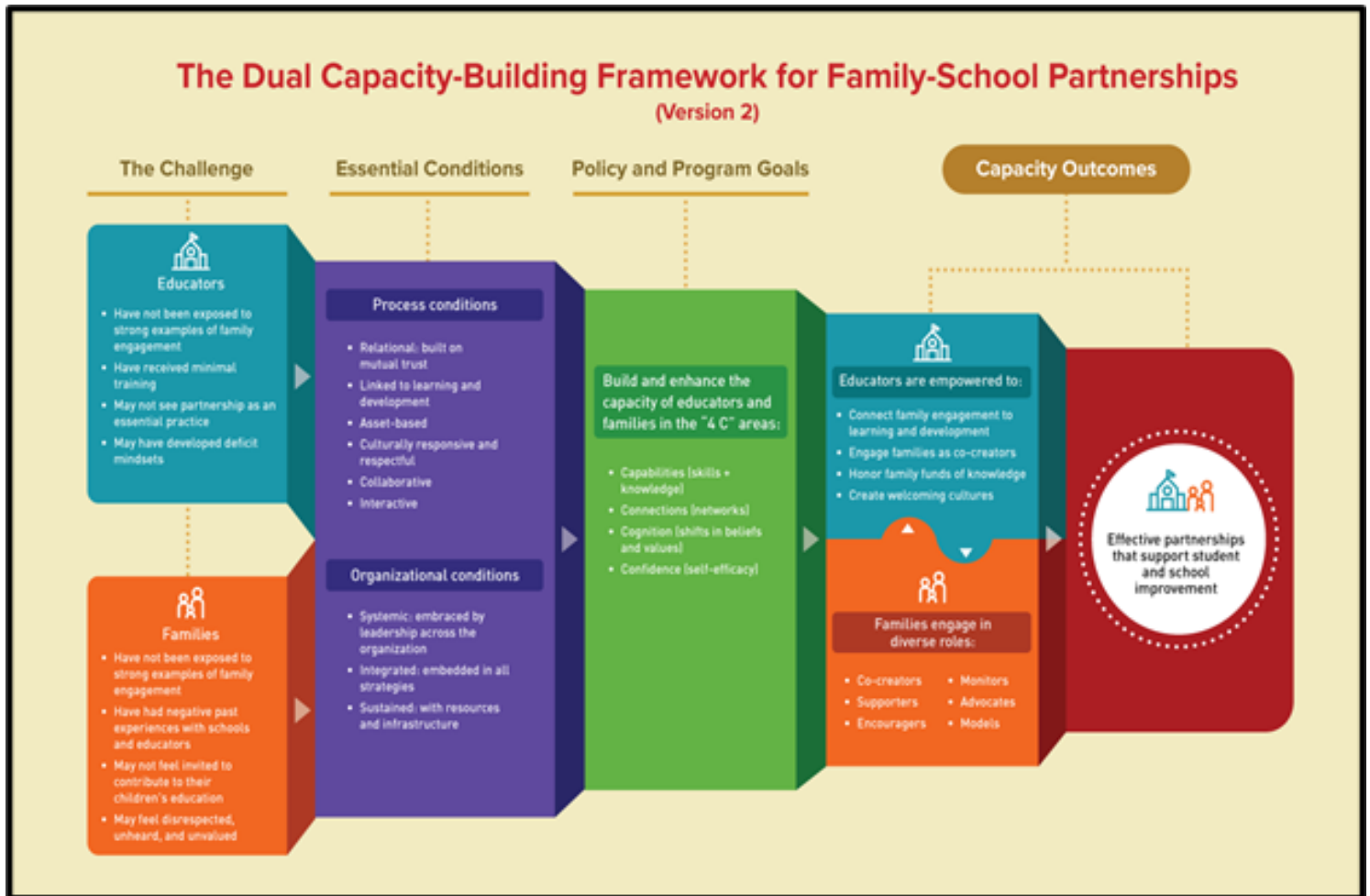
Special Needs Example:

- Achievement for All, which is sponsored by the Department for Education in the United Kingdom, engaged parents with their children's learning which improved performance dramatically for children with special needs and disabilities or from low-income families. The linchpin of the program is collaborative 'Structured Conversations' between teachers and parents, targeted on students' reading and math skills. Not only did the program yield significant gains, it also narrowed the achievement gap between students with special needs and their peers without special needs. This approach was equally effective with low-income students. [Click here for full research brief "Special Needs Example: Achievement for All"](#)



The "How" of Family Engagement: The Dual Capacity-Building Framework

This guidance is adapted from Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity Building Framework as the research-based "How" to do impactful family engagement.



View larger image and more information about this Framework at <https://www.dualcapacity.org/>

4 CORE BELIEFS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

For programming to thrive, we must agree and embrace, as a staff, these core beliefs:

1. All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them
2. All families have the capacity to support their children's learning
3. Families and program staff are equal partners
4. The responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships among school and early childhood programs, home and community rests primarily with school staff, especially program leaders.

Quick and Easy Ideas:

Everyday Family Engagement Strategies for Early Education Programs

1. Enrollment Sets the Tone! Create a one pager to describe the relationship between your Center and families as they are key partners in the success of their child. List what families can expect from the program, such as monthly newsletters, frequent communication from staff and describe what is expected of the family stating “You can play a role in your child’s education in any of the following ways”... and list multiple roles your Center invites families to participate and have them check-mark their areas of interest, for example: Will attend quarterly family nights where they can meet other families and/or I will learn new ways of working with my child at home to support learning at school.

2. Greet every family by name instead of “Jack’s mom”

3. Identify the home languages of all your families and translate materials



4. Create signage that sets the tone that families are essential to child’s success. Ex. “Together we are Better!”, “Families and Teachers Funds of Knowledge- Ask us what this means”, “You are your child’s First and most important teacher”, “Roles families play in our Center.” Use real pictures of current families when you can, to expand on the statement.

5. During a staff meeting, have staff reflect to the 4 core beliefs and share which families each finds most difficult to partner with and why. You will notice this is different for each staff person and staff can support one another with different types of families.

6. Intentionally keep note of family participation. Choose a staff person to connect with families who don’t typically respond or participate to find out strategies for communication or other barriers that may exist.

7. Invite community partners to host “Parent Workshops” where they can promote their services and you can help families connect. Offer childcare and interpretation when possible.

8. Utilize Zoom and online platforms for communications- YouTube videos explaining new classroom concept and lessons that month. *Look into different online interpretation/features*

“Zoom Story time”

- “YouTube- About our Classroom Calendar”
- “YouTube-Strength Spotting in 2 and 3-year-olds”



9. Every classroom posts its weekly schedule on Monday outside the door, by text and by email. Always include a “Here’s what you can do at home” section. Even simple questions like, “Did you start a new letter this week?”

10. Every staff person wears a name tag with their first name, posts a short bio outside the classroom and on the school website.

11. Host “Family Conferences” at least 3 times a year. This can be in person, on the phone or online video.

12. Make sure that the tone of all family communications is respectful and promotes partnership. “If I was a parent, would this feel good to receive?”

13. Highlight and celebrate families and staff who are demonstrating effective partnerships. “Power Partnership Spotlight”

14. Family partnership has a prominent place on the program's website

15. The space where staff and families gather is welcoming and has adult sized chairs :) Make it look like a living room.

16. The program surveys families for their input on program improvements, desired topics for quarterly learning programs, preferred events, guest speakers from the community, etc. Offer multiple ways families can give their input and translate.

17. Classroom staff send home activities at least once a month that families can do with their children.



18. Put up a “Give and Get” Board where families can offer items or services they can give and request things they need. For example “I have toddler boys clothes” “Call me if you need a ride to Kindergarten orientation night. I live in Hallow Woods” and on get things like “Anyone have coats size 3? Text:_____”. Ask a parent to oversee this board each year so it’s for “parents by parents”.

19. Ask families to write a “Hopes and Dreams” letters request every year. What do they hope and dream for their child this coming year? Have teachers read these letters to learn more about families.

20. Set families up for success with a strong transition to Kindergarten plan, with all local schools through visits, letters, and introduction phone calls. Work with the family to create an “All About Me” one pager on their child’s strengths, learning styles, important things to know, unique personality, challenges, and how the family is and wants to be involved as a Partner!



This idea list was created for Ky Early Education Centers by Ky Collaborative for Families and Schools. Find more resources here: <https://prichardcommittee.org/familyengagement/> (3.15.22)



4 Versions of Family-School Partnerships

Check the boxes that have the most statements under them marked or circled. Check only 1 box in each row

Partnership School

Open-Door School

Come-if-We-Call School

Fortress School

All families & communities have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.	Parents can be involved at our school in many ways—we're working hard to get an even bigger turnout for our activities. When we ask the community to help, people often respond.	Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home. We know where to get community help if we need it.	Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support. We're already doing all we can. Our school is an oasis in a troubled community. We want to keep it that way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">Family center is always open, full of interesting materials to borrowHome visits are made to every new familyActivities honor families' contributionsBuilding is open to community use & social services are available to families	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers contact families once a yearParent coordinator is available if families have questions or need helpOffice staff are friendlyStaff contact community agencies & organizations when help is needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">Better-educated parents are more involved"Many immigrant parents don't have time to come or contribute"Staff are very selective about who comes into the school	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">Families do not "bother" school staff"Minority families don't value education"Parents need security clearance to come inIt is important to keep community influences out of the school
<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">All family activities connect to what students are learningParents & teachers look at student work & test results togetherCommunity groups offer tutoring & homework programs at the schoolStudents' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers explain test scores if askedFolders of student work go home occasionallySchool holds curriculum nights 3 or 4 times a yearStaff let families know about out-of-school classes in the community	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open houseParents can call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homeworkWorkshops are offered on parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Curriculum & standards are considered too complex for parents to understand"If parents want more information, they can ask for it""We're teachers, not social workers"
<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none">Translators are readily availableTeachers use books & materials about families' culturesPTA/PTO includes all familiesLocal groups help staff reach families	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none">Office staff will find a translator if parents ask in advanceMulticultural nights are held once a year"Minority" parents have their own group	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none">"We can't deal with 20 different languages""Parents can bring a translator with them""This school just isn't the same as it used to be"	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none">"Those parents need to learn English""We teach about our country—that's what those parents need to know""This neighborhood is going downhill"
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">There is a clear, open process for resolving problemsTeachers contact families each month to discuss student progressStudent-led parent-teacher conferences are held 3 times a year for 30 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Principal will meet with parents to discuss a problemRegular progress reports go to parents, but test data can be hard to understandParent-teacher conferences are held twice a year	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">School calls families when children have problemsFamilies visit school on report card pick up day & can see a teacher if they call first	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents don't come to conferencesProblems are dealt with by the professional staffTeachers don't feel safe with parents
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents & teachers research issues such as prejudice & trackingParent group is focused on improving student achievementFamilies are involved in all major decisionsParents can use the school's phone, copier, fax, & computersStaff work with local organizers to improve the school & the neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents can raise issues at PTA/PTO meetings or see the principalParent group sets its own agenda & raises money for the schoolResource center for low-income families is housed in a portable classroom next to the schoolPTA/PTO officers can use the school officeA community representative sits on the school council	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none">Principal sets agenda for parent meetingsPTA/PTO gets the school's message out"Parents are not experts in education"Community groups can address the school board if they have concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none">Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help outFamilies are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid""Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education."

6 ESSENTIAL PROGRAM CONDITIONS

USE THESE AS CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH STAFF AND AS A CHECKLIST SYSTEM WHEN CONSIDERING NEW FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN YOUR PROGRAM:

1. RELATIONAL

- How are we helping build authentic trusting relationships between families and the program?
- How is staff seeking input from all families?
- How does staff honor the expertise of families?
- How do we show families we truly see them as essential partners?

2. LINKED TO LEARNING

- Are families taking home new ideas that they can use to support their child's academic and development needs in the classroom and at home?
- In what ways do we provide families concrete activities to support their child's development at home?
- Is the staff familiar with some of the ways each family supports their child's development at home?
- How is the staff acknowledging families as capable of learning and as part of the teaching team for their child?

3. ASSET BASED

- How are we drawing on each families' funds-of-knowledge about their child? Funds of knowledge: The idea that families have explicit and important knowledge about their child and their community that is extremely valuable for a teacher (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez, 2005).
- How are we providing opportunities for families to shine and tell us what they are good at and what they can offer to the program or other families?
- Is the staff open to the variety of roles families can play in the classroom based on their strengths, unique interests and personality type?

4. CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND RESPECTFUL

- How do we celebrate differences among children and families?
- Are we providing opportunities for Families to Engage in Diverse Roles? Families can be Co-creators, Supporters, Encouragers, Monitors, Advocates, and/or Models
- Do we make it a priority to address language barriers in all communications? Does staff know family members' level of literacy?

5. COLLABORATIVE

- Are we intentional in helping families get to know other families? Are we creating activities and experiences that help these real connections happen?
- Do we survey families about how they want to connect with other families, teachers and staff?
- Do we have a policy that ensures each family can name at least one person in the program they can call if they need something?
- How could we utilize all staff in the building to make personal contact with every family at least twice a year?

6. INTERACTIVE

- When planning events for families do we consider the Principles of Adult Learning?
- Adults must want to learn.
- Adults will learn only when they feel they need to learn.
- Adults learn by doing.
- Adults learning focuses on problems, and the problems must be realistic.



A Special Message To Center Directors

Building a culture where family partnerships thrive is more than adding a few family partnership activities. It is about the feeling families get when they first enter your program. What about your program says to all families that they are respected partners who have much to contribute to the success of their children? How do you set the expectation, starting at enrollment, that you want them to bring their strengths, talents and insights (funds of knowledge) to the shared teaching of their child?

Motivate staff through your energy around family engagement. Remember the 4th Core Belief for the Dual Capacity Building Framework: “The responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships among school and early childhood programs, home and community rests primarily with school staff, especially program leaders.” The leader of the program is the most important resource for building impactful family partnerships. It is the director’s willingness to honestly assess his/her strengths and areas of growth in working with all families, especially families that are harder to reach. **No early childhood program will develop and maintain powerful family partnerships if the director is not leading and fully supportive of the effort.**

Measure and Monitor the growth of family partnerships in your program. Getting honest and timely feedback from families is important in creating an environment where impactful partnerships grow. Quick pulse check questions can be just as effective as long surveys, for example, ask families on a likert scale of 1-5 “How engaged do you currently feel with your child’s learning? How welcome do you feel at our school? How comfortable are you talking with school staff about concerns and needs?” This helps you change directions when needed, solicit new ideas from families, and double-down on strategies that seem to be working.

Model what you want to see FROM your staff with YOUR action. If you want staff to conduct check-in calls with families twice a year, you should be conducting check-in calls with staff as well. If you want family meetings to be cozy and inviting, your staff meetings should feel welcoming and inviting too. Try new ideas within your staff culture to build confidence, community and kindness and then conduct similar pulse check surveys to see if your ideas are working. The biggest complaint we hear from staff is the TIME it takes to be personable with families. Find ways to allow even 30 minutes a month for staff to make phone calls, write encouraging letters or create home learning kits. Welcome this as a group process and adventure! You won’t always get it right but the important thing is to be committed as a program to family engagement and begin co-creating what this looks like in your center with staff and families.



The "What" of Family Engagement: Program Self-Assessment

KY FAMILY AND EARLY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT: For use by family child care, school based, and center-based early learning providers.

This self-assessment provides programs a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas of growth in creating impactful family partnerships. There are five essential components and each of these five objectives has three or more critical components. Several of these critical components create alignment between this process and KY ALL STARS. Each critical component can be scored at one of four levels: "0 not here yet, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 or Level 4". See bottom of page for explanation of levels.

TIP FOR USE:

- It is okay to score "0 not yet." Completing this Self-Assessment is about building awareness on where the program is now and being inspired to set goals and make progress. Whatever the beginning score is, children win if the staff get an accurate picture of strengths and areas of growth. This creates the basis to build effective partnerships!
- Identify a small group to take this self-assessment and then discuss reflections as a group. We recommend 2 families, 2 staff and the program director. Each participant takes the assessment separately. Next, meet as a group to compare and discuss scores. Try to come to a consensus on a performance score and use this as a benchmark for tracking ongoing family engagement efforts. Revisit the assessment at least annually to see if your scores are improving.
- Build on your strengths! Use objectives where you are already strong to make progress in other objectives and critical attributes. For example, if your Communication scores are high, use these same strategies to increase "Relationship Building" and "Shared Responsibility."
- Remember: Improving family engagement efforts is a process, not a checklist. Be patient and celebrate each step you take!

[KY FAMILY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT \(CLICK HERE\)](#)

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

- **Level 1:** Practices reflect a growing interest in staff's capacity to engage families in the learning process. Programs in this category are good at keeping families informed of children's progress.
- **Level 2:** Practices reflect a mindset or belief that all families play a vital role in the education process. Programs in this category are good at using a variety of inclusive approaches to engage families in learning and center improvement efforts.
- **Level 3:** Practices reflect wide-spread belief, knowledge, and skill in engaging all families as equal and productive partners in the learning process. It is evident that staff employ multiple, equity-driven strategies to individualize engagement with families that respect their values and cultural backgrounds. Programs at this level can apply to be certified as **Family Friendly Early Care and Education Programs. This certification counts as all 10 points in the domain of Family and Community Engagement in KY ALL STARS.**
- **Level 4:** Practices engage families as co-creators in the education process. Programs at this level can be certified as a **Family Friendly Early Care and Education Program- Gold.**



Creating a Family Engagement Action Team and Plan

MAKE A GROUP: Make a group: The Director should put together a diverse team of families, staff and program administration. We recommend a team of at least five (2 families, 2 staff and program director) and no more than seven. It is important that the team has members who can represent the diversity of the families and the ages of children the program serves. It is always a good idea to have someone who represents families who have been hard to reach. Incentives such as \$20 Wal-Mart cards, food and free childcare help improve participation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Each participant takes the assessment separately. Next, meet as a group to compare scores and address questions and “ah-has” that arose while completing it. Try to come to a consensus on a performance score and use this as a benchmark for tracking ongoing family engagement efforts and to think about next steps as a program. The group could choose to move a strength (Level 2) to an outstanding asset (Level 3) or move an attribute that scored “0” or “1” to the next level.

ALL STAFF INPUT: It is recommended that the director brings the small groups recommendations and insights to the full staff for input before making final decisions on what parts of building effective family partnerships the program will undertake first. Staff input will give the director important feedback about staff buy-in and the energy that each staff person is initially willing to invest.

*Remember that creating a culture where all families feel welcome and treated as essential partners in the work that the staff does every day takes time. The most important work of the director is helping each staff person reflect on the four core beliefs and essential conditions explain in the “How” section of this Guide. They should reflect on which families they partner with more easily and which families they have difficulty partnering with and why. It is recommended that each staff person create a personal plan that lists strengths and areas of growth for their individual classroom. This may or may not be part of the broader program plan but should be reviewed and supported by the director.

TRY SOMETHING: Convene the diverse team that completed the self-assessment for a second time and share key insights from the full staff meeting. As a group, pick one or two activities using the reflective questions from this Guide, Self- Assessment feedback and/or the Family Engagement Digital Playbook to try. Pick something that has excitement, interest and is measurable. Consider how you need to adapt the strategy to ensure ALL families can benefit from the experience. We recommend making a SMARTE goal (next page).



SMARTER GOAL

S <i>Specific</i>	What specifics will help you know you've reached your goal?
M <i>Measurable</i>	What data or survey questions will you use to measure progress?
A <i>Attainable</i>	With the information, resources and time that you have, can you make this happen?
R <i>Relevant</i>	How is this relevant to the self-assessment objectives and critical attributes?
T <i>Time Bound</i>	When will you complete the activity and when will you collect data/survey information?
E <i>Equity Focused</i>	How does this goal support access and achievement for ALL children in our program? How can we make this more accessible so our harder to reach families will participate?

RIGHT TEAM?: Based on the SMARTER goal you set- are the right people at the table? Decide if you need more families, educators and especially community partners or someone from the elementary schools. Decide who will recruit the additional members and set a date for the meeting.

DIRECTOR PULSE-CHECK: Director should attend team meetings and occasionally survey if the group dynamics are working. Ex:- Is it time well spent? Do they feel engaged and helpful? Are you meeting often enough or too often? How could the group be more effective and diverse?

CELEBRATE!! Building a family partnership culture is hard work and will not happen overnight. Take time to celebrate steps in the right direction.



Online Modules for Early Education Programs

KENTUCKY FAMILY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS : There are five online, free [trainings](#) for early education providers. We recommend all staff and Center Directors complete the first introduction 1 hour training and then choose additional training based on needs and interests of the Center.

MODULE 1

Beyond the Newsletter: Introduction to Family and Early Education Partnership (1 hr)

Training Videos



Intro. Reflection Journal: [\(Doc\)](#) or [\(Pdf\)](#)
[Get Completion Certificate for ECE-TRIS*](#)

MODULE 2

Family Friendly Self-Assessment for Early Education Centers

Training Videos

Relationship Building and Communication: Part 1 (1 Hour)

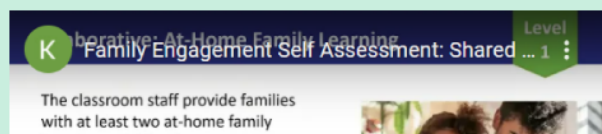


Relationship Building and Communication: Part 2

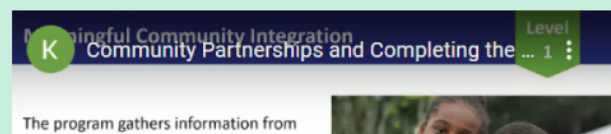


Intro. Reflection Journal: [\(Doc\)](#) or [\(Pdf\)](#)

Shared Responsibility and Advocacy(1 Hour)

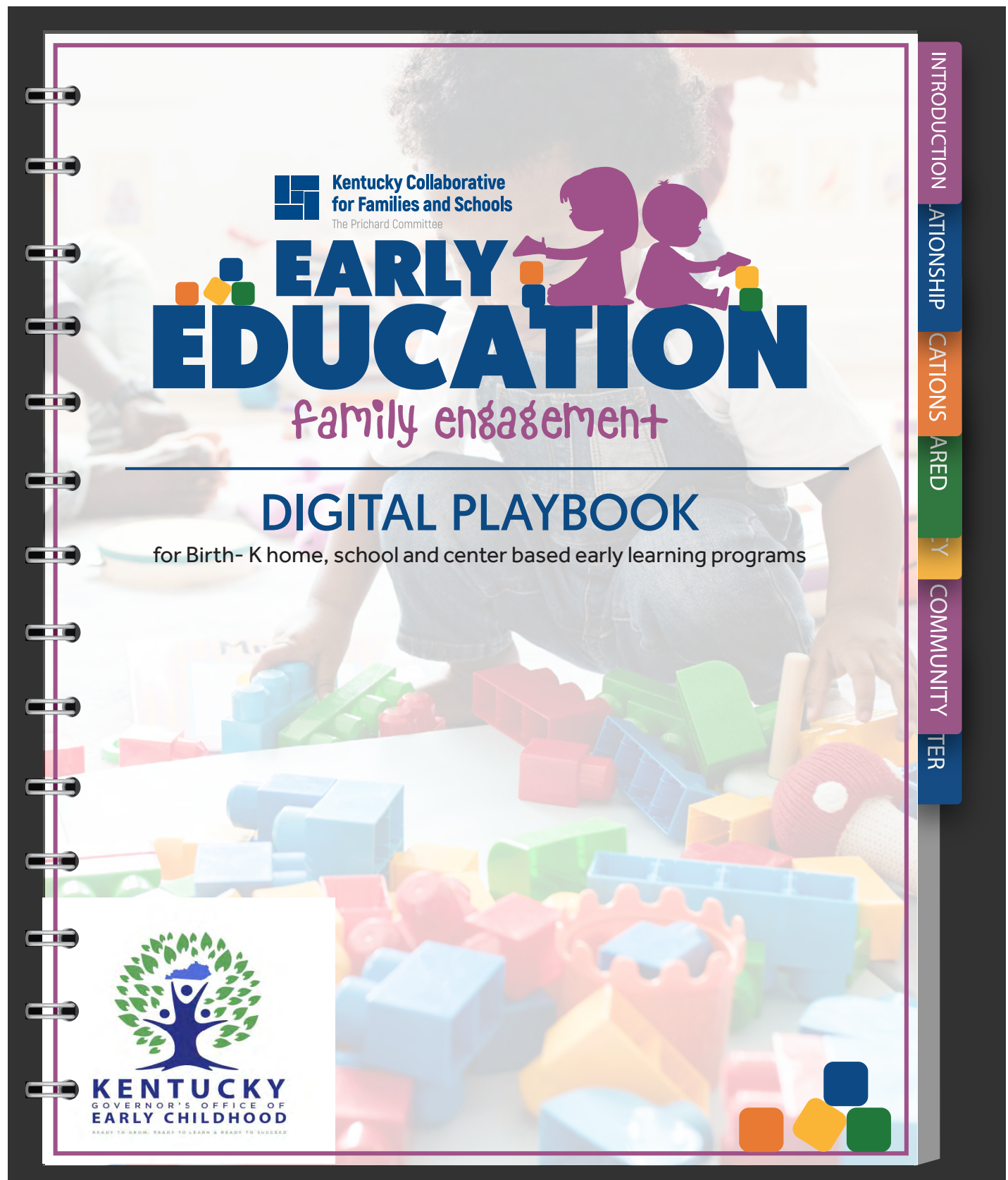


Community Partnerships and Completing the Self Assessment Module(1 Hour)



Early Education Family Engagement Digital Playbook

The Family Engagement Digital Playbook is a collection of information and activities that align to the 5 objectives of the Kentucky Early Education Family Engagement Self-Assessment.



Checklist for Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification

Updated July 2024

Welcome to the Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification process. We're glad you're here. Your program may use the materials located at [Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools - Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence](#) in any way that is helpful to you and your community.

***Spring 2024 applications can be submitted March 15th - May 1st. Applicants will be notified in May regarding their certification status. Fall 2024 applications can be submitted August 15th - October 1st. Applicants will be notified in Oct. regarding their certification status. ***



First steps:

- ☐ If you are a home based center or a small center, [please read this statement](#).
- ☐ Watch this [introduction video](#)
- ☐ Try a small, fun activity to build momentum. We recommend:
 - ☐ [Hopes and Dreams Letter](#)
 - ☐ Small group discussion using [4 Versions of Family-Partnership Schools](#)
- ☐ Ensure that building leader supports the process
 - ☐ A building leader should charge a "team lead" with supervising the work toward Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification over the next several months. Choose someone who has authority, credibility, and good relationships with staff AND families.
 - ☐ Have this team lead look questions on the [application form](#) and accompanying [document for certification](#).
- ☐ A building leader should help recruit the Family Engagement Action Team or charge an existing team with coordinating the work of Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification.
 - ☐ Your action team should reflect the diversity of YOUR program community. If your team does not reflect that diversity, form a plan for how you will involve more voices in your team. Diversity includes different forms of families, racial diversity, language diversity, socio-economic diversity, families with children with special needs.
 - ☐ Team includes at least:
 - ☐ A building leader
 - ☐ two teachers
 - ☐ two family members (*who do not work at your early learning program*).
 - ☐ Note: **If you have a smaller childcare center, you may have less people than listed above. You will have space on the application to explain why your team is different from the suggested list.**
- ☐ Team completes introductory [modules](#)
 - ☐ Two parents complete module 1
 - ☐ Two teachers complete modules 1,2 & 4
 - ☐ A building leader completes modules 1,2,3 & 4



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Making a plan:

- ☐ Survey your program families. We recommend using questions from [this document](#). Use just 3-4 questions to improve your response rate.
- ☐ Have members of your action team score [the self-assessment](#). You can do this independently, but you MUST come together to have a conversation about the self-assessment and reach a consensus score.
Please note that if your center's size is limiting your ability to score a three in some areas, you can still get certified, you will simply be asked to explain in which areas your size impacted your score and how you are working to address those areas
- ☐ Use survey information and self- assessment scores to decide as an action team what areas you will focus on to boost your score. Come up with a list of activities to implement to get you to the level you're seeking. Review the [Kentucky Family Engagement Digital Playbook](#) or [20 everyday strategies](#) for ideas.
- ☐ On the application, you will provide evidence of activities under TWO critical attributes per objective on the self-assessment. Please note, the following critical attributes are required to create alignment with Kentucky All STARS:
 - ☐ Communications- Interactive
 - ☐ Shared Responsibility for Learning
 - ☐ Advocacy- Families as Advocates
 - ☐ Community Partnerships- Effective Partnerships Supporting Program Involvement
 - ☐ Community Partnerships- Sustainable Infrastructure and Resource Processes
- ☐ Make sure that your action plan will give you evidence to report. Here is [guidance regarding evidence](#).

Implementing the plan:

- ☐ Implement the activities your team decided on and collect evidence. Create a google folder (or other shared online space) where members of your team can upload evidence as you work.
- ☐ Continue to gather feedback from families. Purposely seek feedback from families who may not have responded to your survey. For example, your FRYSC staff may gather informal data from participants in a Grandparents as Parents group. You can personalize gathering feedback through individual text messages and phone calls.
- ☐ Continue to make adjustments to your work based on feedback from families

Completing the application:

- ☐ Attend a Family Friendly Open Office Session. [Click here for Fall 2024 dates](#)
- ☐ [Preview the application](#). The link will be live March 15th-May 1st and August 15th-Oct 1. As first time ECE applicants, you will complete pages 23-42. If applying for GOLD, there are additional questions, starting on page 62.
- ☐ Review this guidance of [what pieces of evidence](#) work at each level of each critical attribute.
- ☐ Work with the family engagement action team to compile narrative and evidence to complete these questions in the application. Here is a form with the main areas for [narrative and evidence](#), to help you gather this as a group.
- ☐ [Complete and submit the application](#).

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If you have any questions, email grace@prichardcommittee.org.



Checklist for Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification

Updated July 2024

Early Care and Education Family Friendly Recertification checklist

- ☐ **Reassemble the Family Engagement Action Team with at least:**
 - ☐ 2 classroom staff
 - ☐ 2 parents/family leaders who are not center staff
 - ☐ 1 center director/building administrator
 - ☐ If you add additional school staff, please consider adding additional parents

Please note: **If you have a smaller childcare center, you may have less people than listed above. You will have space on the application to explain why your team is different from the suggested list.**
- ☐ **Team should complete the following:**
 - ☐ Complete 1 hour PD
 - Suggested options can be found at the bottom of [this webpage](#)
 - Other PDs that are focused on family engagement/ family school partnerships will also be counted
 - ☐ Reassess the center based on the rubric and affirm that the center is at least at level 3.
 - ☐ Ensure that the program director and 75% of staff had 1 hour of Family Engagement Professional Development in the past 3 years.
 - ☐ Review the questions for recertification (pages 43-51, with additional questions starting on page 62 if you are applying for GOLD).
 - ☐ Determine how tasks of gathering evidence and writing narrative will be completed.
 - ☐ [Complete the application](#), submitting evidence and narrative that supports reviewers in understanding your continuous improvement in Family Engagement.



Checklist for Family Friendly Early Learning Program Certification

Updated July 2024

Family Friendly Early Learning Program Requirement Checklist

	Standard Certification	Gold Certification	Standard RECERT	GOLD RECERT
Family Engagement Action Team (FEAT) – minimum 2 parents, 2 teachers, 1 building leader	x	x	x	x
2 parents on FEAT who are NOT program staff	x	x	x	x
FE Action Team members complete self-assessment	x	x	x	x
Average self-assessment score	3	3	4	4
Complete introductory modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> two parents complete module 1 two teachers complete modules 1,2,4 A building leader completes modules 1,2,3,4 	x	x		
Ensure that 75 % of staff have had at least one hour of Family Engagement Training in the past 3 years	x	x	x	x
Complete Family Engagement PD of your choice (2 parents, 2 teachers, 1 building leader)			x	x
Provide evidence for self-assessment through narrative and documentation	x	x	Simplified version	Simplified version
Continuous Improvement Plan: Share how you are making improvements based on best practices in family engagement and family feedback	x	x	x	x
Demonstrate action to get feedback from all families, especially previously unreached families	x	x	x	x
Submit significant evidence of co-creation with families		x		x
Submit significant evidence of engagement with all families		x		x
Submit significant evidence of how family engagement is woven throughout entire school culture		x		x