Culturally Responsive Family Engagement

Extending an Invitation to Parents and a Mirror to Children

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Ready@5 Symposium Workshop
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MAEC, Inc.

MAEC was founded in 1991 as an education non-profit dedicated to increasing access to a high quality education for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse learners.

Vision
MAEC envisions a day when all students have equitable opportunities to learn and achieve at high levels.

Mission
MAEC’s mission is to promote excellence and equity in education to achieve social justice.
Collaborative Action for Family Engagement

A Statewide Family Engagement Center
A project of MAEC, INC.
Who We Are

**CAFE**

The Collaborative Action for Family Engagement (CAFE) Center is a project of MAEC, Inc. We apply an equity lens to family engagement. By building relationships among schools, parents, and community organizations, we improve the development and academic achievement of all students.
A little about me
Objectives and Agenda for Today

1. Let’s talk about family engagement
2. Let’s explore “culturally responsive”
3. Strategies for culturally responsive family engagement (invitations & mirrors)
4. Let’s be real…what does this mean in Covid-19 times?
5. Survey and contact info
NAEYC Values Culture & Equity

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. As a result, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they, the early learning settings in which they work, and their wider communities embrace diversity and inclusivity as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.
Inequality
Unequal access to opportunities

Equality?
Evenly distributed tools and assistance

Equity
Custom tools that identify and address inequality

Justice
Fixing the system to offer equal access to both tools and opportunities
Part 1.
Let’s talk about family engagement
Maryland’s Definition of Family Engagement

Family engagement is a *shared* responsibility of families, schools, and communities for student learning and achievement; it is continuous from birth into the school-age years; and it occurs where children are, across the various early care and learning settings.

Family engagement means building relationships with families that support *family well-being*, strong parent–child *relationships*, and the *ongoing learning and development* of parents and children alike.

It reflects *culturally competent* and universal design approaches, encompassing the *beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and activities* of all families, as well as early care *settings* that support all children’s positive development. Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood settings, school, and community.
Exploring the Concept

Family (not just parent)

Engagement (not just involvement)

In what? In children’s:
• health and physical well-being
• social and emotional development
• Self-regulation
• cognitive growth
• Approaches to learning

In short:

engagement in the educational journey
Where?

AT HOME, IN THE PROGRAM

Supporting parents with...

Feeling welcome and valuable in the program/classroom
Awareness of child development
Modeling warm, responsive interactions
Exchanging child-specific information on regular basis
Ideas for stimulating activities, scaffolding,
Connecting with others

... AND EVERYWHERE
Working Together to Help Children/Youth Learn and Grow

- Prenatal to 21
- Systemic, not random
- It takes a village
- Proactive versus problem solving
- It’s not just about caring, it’s about systems
Why Does Family Engagement Matter?

Parents are children’s first educators

Parent-child relationships form the foundation

Cognitive | Language | Socio-emotional development

Children thrive when they have close, high-quality relationships with family > invest time & resources

Sources: (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; (Sandler, Ingram, Wolchik, Tein, & Winslow, 2015); (Carneiro, Meghir, & Parey, 2013).
And the benefits roll into future success

Over 40 years of research tell us that students with involved families were more likely to

● Develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom
● Earn higher grades, test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
● Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
● Attend school regularly
● Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
● Graduate high school and go for more education

Source: Henderson & Mapp (2002). A New Wave of Evidence. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Why Does Family Engagement Matter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Students</th>
<th>To Families</th>
<th>To Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Higher grades and test scores, enrollment in AP</td>
<td>● More interaction, more sensitivity to children’s emotional and intellectual needs</td>
<td>● Teachers and administrators have higher morale and job satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Grade promotions, more credits</td>
<td>● More confidence in parenting abilities</td>
<td>● Parents have more respect of the teaching profession</td>
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<td>● Better school attendance and homework completion rates</td>
<td>● Better understanding of teacher’s role and curriculum</td>
<td>● Communication improves among educators, parents, administrators</td>
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<td>● Improved social skills and behavior</td>
<td>● More responsive to teachers’ requests for help at home</td>
<td>● Communities have higher opinions of schools with involved parents</td>
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<td>● Higher self-esteem</td>
<td>● More committed to their children’s schools</td>
<td>● School programs that involve parents perform better, have higher-quality classrooms</td>
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<td>● High school graduation and college education</td>
<td>● More active in policymaking at school and in the community</td>
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Source: Henderson & Mapp (2002). A New Wave of Evidence. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Part 2.
Let’s explore “culturally responsive”
Who am I?
“Water? Oh, that’s good! Hah hah hah! How very droll! No, sorry old man, no water here… This is a cultural oasis!”
YOU DON'T LOOK CHINESE ENOUGH.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
Well, that's a very German Shepherd.
“The shareholders want more cultural diversity. Choose a si-man, hai-man, and ja-man to replace three yes-men.”
And too many of our people are wearing Western clothes.
“Our goal is to establish language that is gender-neutral, ethnic-neutral, and age-neutral, while celebrating our spirit of diversity.”
Culturally responsive care and education facilitates learning experiences for all children, especially underserved children, in ways that acknowledge and affirm the cultures and lived experiences of them and their families.
What is Cultural Competence?

As culturally competent educators…

We take into account sociopolitical issues that affect children and families at each developmental stage.

We commit to initiate

- explicit intent to improve educational experiences
- transformative changes in practice and decision-making
- a focus on children and families
We only see the tip of the iceberg
Culture
What Are We Talking About?

• Culture is not inherited
• We are socialized to behave according to traditions
• Established over generations

The Diversity Wheel. Loden & Rosener, 1991
Cultural Considerations

Who am I? Reflect...

1. Sense of self and space
2. Communication and language
3. Dress and appearance
4. Food and eating habits
5. Time and time consciousness
cultural considerations continued

6. Relationships
7. Values and norms
8. Beliefs and attitudes
9. Mental processes and learning
10. Work habits and practices
Part 3.
What are some strategies?
Invitations to parents and mirrors to children
Reflections

• How did families experience connection with the program before COVID?

• After shut downs?

• How did you experience the engagement?

• What were some of your successes, especially with families from a different background?
Deepen Respect for All Parents Do

In addition to basic provisions, parents provide...

- Nurturing (love, care, warmth, positivity)
- Discipline
- Teaching (including by modeling)
- Language (knowledge, emotion, values, culture; storytelling, reading, questions, conversations)
- Materials (providing materials to stimulate cognition, creativity, activity)
- Monitoring (supervision, safety, screen time)
- Management (scheduling events, carrying out plans, household rhythms and routines)

Brooks-Gunn & Markman (2005)
NAEYC Pathways to Cultural Competence

1. Teacher reflection

2. Intentional decision-making and practice

3. Strengths-based perspective

4. Open, on-going, two-way communication
Be the **host**: Reach out to families

**Invite families in**
- Create a space
- Create touchpoints
- Create opportunities for input, contribution
- Continuously invite

**Build parents’...**
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Feelings of efficacy
- Sense of security and connection

**It will influence**
- their interactions with children
- parenting skills
- the home environment
- YOUR interactions with children
Building Partnerships with Families
Research supported practices for professionals

Start Early
Gakando and Sheldon, 2011

Relationships Matter
Bryk et al, 2010; Mapp 2014; Sheldon & Jung, 2015

Understand and Value Families
Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000; Sheldon & Jung, 2015

Listen And Inform

Share progress
Sheldon & Jung, 2015

Link to Learning
Henderson & Mapp 2002

Multiple Opportunities
Mapp, 2014

Expectations
Hill & Tyson, 2011

Marathon - Not Sprint

Boone, 2015
Giving children a mirror: 10 ideas

1. **Presenting diverse images that acknowledge children** – Providing images of characters that look, sound, and live the same way they do.

2. **Depicting everyday situations** – Represent diverse characters in ordinary situations

3. **Feature mixed groups** – Feature mixed-culture groups of characters working together, finding adventures or overcoming obstacles together.

4. **Musical diversity** – Children may be prompted to sing along with their favorite characters in another language or mimic dances from other cultures.
5. **Discuss ceremonies and traditions** – Help children see beyond the scope of their own households.

6. **Honor home languages** – Represent home languages in the program with labels, books and use of basic words.

7. **Create opportunities for families** – Invite families into the program to share about a holiday, tradition or story.
8. Be aware of stereotypes – stereotypes can be broken or disregarded through stories, conversations, questions

9. Presenting diversity to culturally isolated children – For homogenous groups, expose them to backgrounds and values they might not know about

10. Use resources from other cultures – For example, Pokemon is full of references to Japanese culture
Part 4.
But really? In Covid times?
Culturally Responsive Family Engagement in Covid Times: Your Experience

• How can you center families voices now and upon re-openings?

• How can you address their fears and concerns?

• What structures could you put in place to support and engage with families?
Even in a pandemic, caregiving truths cut across cultures

Encourage parents to -

- Be a role model... stay calm and carry on (or, be a non-anxious presence for children)
- Set up routines
- Have a place in the home if possible for playing, quiet time, movement
- Balance physical well-being (eating, sleeping) with other activities
- Look for ways to keep children engaged with others
Staying in touch

- Have regular touch points with families
- Stay in touch in whatever way works for families—just ask
- Role model informal connections; keep a light touch
- Be mindful of families’ cultural lens as you engage
- Connect families with families
- Take care of yourself too!
TOP 3 TIPS

No assumptions.

No meaningful learning without meaningful relationships.

Just ask!
Part 5.
In closing
Carrying on and staying strong
Thank you! Questions & Feedback

Please take our survey!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KWSSHYK
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Thank you!