

# Engaging Families with At-Home Activities

**By: Linda Butkovich**

Research has consistently demonstrated a relationship between families engaged in their children's learning and development and positive outcomes for their children. Considering this, it is important to distinguish *family engagement* from *family involvement* or *family support*. When we think about family engagement, we often think about inviting families to participate in events, meetings, and classroom routines at the early learning program. We might also consider offering support to families, such as sharing information about community resources or sharing information on supports that may reduce child care costs. However, family engagement is so much more! It is authentic collaboration (based on mutual trust and respect) between the provider and families on how to promote their children's learning, development, and well-being.

The second edition of the *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (BAS), an assessment tool for measuring business and professional practices, was recently revised and includes a greater emphasis on family support and engagement. At the "excellent level" of quality—in addition to family involvement and family support practices—"families participate in an at-home learning activity that the provider makes available." At home learning activities may include a lending library of books, activities, games, or puzzles. The intent is for families and children to work together at home to extend the learning on a topic or skill introduced in the family child care program. Remember, collaboration is a two-way street so providers should create learning activities based on areas of interest shared by families.

Here are some additional ways providers may extend the learning and skills they are introducing in their programs:

- You and the children in your care are excited about the forecast of a snowstorm. Ask families to measure the number of inches of snow that fall near their home.
- Children are interested in building roads in the block area. Suggest to families that they point out traffic signs on their way home and talk to their children about what the signs mean. They may want to take a picture of an interesting sign and send it to the provider so that she and the children can make this sign into a prop for their block play.
- Teach the children a new song or fingerplay and send a recording to the families so they can sing it with their children at home. Invite families to come in and teach the children a song they sang when they were young.
- Introduce simple yoga poses to the children (<https://www.kidsyogastories.com/kids-yoga-poses/>). Share some of these poses with your families and ask them to have their children teach them how to do the poses.

- You and the children routinely discuss the different colors of food on their plates at lunch time. On their next visit to the grocery store, ask families to spend some time with their children in the produce section, looking for different colors of fruits and vegetables. They might take a picture of their child's favorite color food!
- Suggest to families that they make counting part of their routines. For example, how many stairs does their child go up or down to reach your early care and learning program? How many buses, trains, or trucks do they see on the way home?
- Create a word wall in your program. Ask the families to send in new words their child learns. The child may even want to write their new word themselves or draw a picture representation to share.

### Reflecting on Practice

What do you do to extend the learning beyond your program and into the home?

### References

Talan, T.T. & Bloom, P.J. (2018) *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: NY: Teachers College Press.

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