



## Facilitator’s Guide

### Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
About this Guide .....	2
Learning Goals .....	2
Agenda .....	3
Preparation .....	3
Facilitation Tips .....	4
Icebreaker Ideas .....	4
<b>Training</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Introduction .....	7
Getting Families Involved (Overview) .....	8
Build Relationships with Families .....	9
Help Families Extend the Learning .....	11
Try It .....	14
Wrap Up .....	14
Glossary .....	15
<b>Handouts</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Self-Assessment	
Learning Log	
Try It	
Best Practices	
Learning Guidelines and Standards	
Training Evaluation	

### Videos

**Stream from [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/)**

“Getting Families Involved” (Overview)

“Build Relationships with Families”

“Help Families Extend the Learning”

## Introduction

This professional development training module is designed to help you lead educators in using best practices to build positive and collaborative relationships with families. It is one of several modules developed for early childhood educators by the Department of Early Education and Care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This training meets the guidelines for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as outlined by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MassAEYC).

For more information about this professional development training module, visit [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/).

## About this Guide

This Facilitator's Guide provides instructions and narrative for delivering a video-based training for early childhood educators. You'll find an agenda, learning goals, preparation suggestions, talking points, activities, and handouts. You'll also find general tips and resources to help you facilitate the training. Use these materials with the accompanying videos to lead family child care and center- and school-based educators in an engaging, content-rich training.

**Note:** To view the videos referenced in this guide, go to [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/). Select “*Getting Families Involved.*” Be sure you have access to the videos prior to and while leading this training.

## Learning Goals

After participating in this training, educators will be able to:

- Summarize the best practices for getting families involved in the early childhood learning experience.
- Describe strategies for how to build positive and collaborative relationships with families of early learners.
- Support families in extending the learning from the early childhood environment to the home.
- Apply new knowledge to current practices.

## Agenda

Introduction	15 minutes
Getting Families Involved	5 minutes
Build Relationships with Families	15–20 minutes
BREAK (optional)	5–10 minutes
Help Families Extend the Learning	15–20 minutes
Try It	15–20 minutes
Wrap Up	5–10 minutes
<b>Total Time</b>	<b>75–100 minutes</b>

## Preparation

Before leading this training, you should:

- Watch the videos and get to know the best practices.
- Read through the training module. Become familiar with the talking points so that you can share them in a natural, conversational way.
- Obtain and test the technology you need to share the videos with participants and make sure you have a reliable Internet connection during the training.
- Gather any props or materials needed for the Try It activity.
- Rehearse and fine-tune your presentation to “make it your own.” Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time.
- Create a handout packet with copies of the following for each participant:
  - Self-Assessment
  - Learning Log
  - Try It
  - Best Practices
  - Learning Guidelines and Standards
  - Training Evaluation
- Consider working with a partner the first time you lead this training. You can learn from and support each other when preparing, practicing, and facilitating. After the training, you can reflect on participants' evaluations together.

## Facilitation Tips

Whether you're a new or experienced facilitator, these tips can help your training run smoothly.

- Arrive early to prepare the training room for optimal learning.
  - Place handout packets where participants check in.
  - Have pens or pencils and paper on every table.
  - Check your technology setup to make sure videos play without problem.
- Create a space that is inviting and comfortable.
  - Play soft music as people arrive.
  - Greet participants with a smile and a handshake. A personal introduction helps set the stage for collaboration and learning.
- Invite partner or small group discussion.
  - Before the training begins, invite educators to identify a partner. People learn best when they have a chance to talk about what they are learning or thinking.
  - Allow a few minutes for partners to introduce themselves to each other.
  - During the training, provide opportunities for partner interaction.
- Keep participants engaged.
  - Follow the “ten-two rule” as you present the training: Speak for no longer than ten minutes at a time and then provide participants at least two minutes of interaction or activity.
  - Avoid simply reading the talking points that have been provided. Become familiar with each point so that you can keep the training engaging, fluid, and conversational.

## Icebreaker Ideas

When working with a group of educators who may or may not know each other, it's a good idea to provide a few moments to “break the ice.” This allows people to relax, laugh, move, and get to know each other (and you). Below are just a few ideas you can use to begin a training session.

### That's Me!

Read a statement aloud to the group. Ask participants to stand up, raise a hand in the air, and shout *That's me!* if the statement applies to them. It's fun to see which statements apply to all participants and which do not apply to any. Statements might include:

## Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

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- *I teach at a family child care.*
- *I have worked with children for five years or more.*
- *I was born in Massachusetts.*
- *I write down the funny things that kids say.*
- *I laugh out loud at least once a day.*
- *I check Pinterest at least once a week.*
- *I have no idea what Pinterest is.*
- *I believe that there is no problem that good chocolate can't solve.*

You can come up with your own statements or invite a few participants to come up with statements. When they say their statement aloud, others (including you) can reply, *That's me!*

### Weave a Web

Holding onto a ball of yarn, share your name and an interesting fact about yourself with participants. Keep the end piece as you toss the ball of yarn to a participant. Ask the participant to share his or her name and a personal fact, and hold onto the yarn as they toss the ball to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a turn and the "web" is complete.

### Two Truths and a Lie

Ask participants to jot down two truths and one lie about themselves or their work with children. For example:

- *I speak Japanese.*
- *I am related to Davy Crockett.*
- *I have three sets of twins in my program this year.*

Form participants into small groups of three or four people. Have each person in the group read their statements aloud and ask the rest of the group to guess which statement is not true.

### Four Corners

Post a word from a set of four related words in each corner of the room, such as:

- *lion, bear, eagle, deer*
- *desert, beach, mountain, city*
- *sushi, salad, enchilada, pizza*
- *hybrid, convertible, truck, Mustang*

Ask participants, *Are you a hybrid, convertible, truck, or Mustang?* Direct participants to move to the corner of the room with which they most identify. Ask participants, now in small groups in their corners, to share with one another why they chose that corner and how it represents their interests, so that they can discover common attributes they may share. Have each small group pick one person to share the group’s common attributes with the larger group. Repeat the process with another set of four words as many times as you like.

**People Bingo**

Photocopy and distribute the “bingo card” below. Invite participants to find people who match a fact listed on the card and have them sign off on that fact. Each person can sign off on only one fact. Explain that when a participant has obtained five signatures in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), he or she should shout *Bingo!* and introduce the people who signed his or her card to the rest of the group.

<b>People Bingo</b>				
<b>Has traveled outside the U.S.</b>	<b>Likes pineapple on pizza</b>	<b>Has lived in MA for more than 10 years</b>	<b>Knows how to juggle</b>	<b>Has never been on a plane</b>
<b>Can speak a foreign language</b>	<b>Has 3 or more brothers</b>	<b>Likes to camp</b>	<b>Has been scuba diving</b>	<b>Reads the Sunday paper</b>
<b>Likes to scrapbook</b>	<b>Has a summer birthday</b>	<b>FREE SPACE</b>	<b>Likes to garden</b>	<b>Can say the alphabet backwards</b>
<b>Likes math</b>	<b>Does crossword puzzles</b>	<b>Owens a cat</b>	<b>Has been to Alaska</b>	<b>Likes to run</b>
<b>Likes thunderstorms</b>	<b>Has watched a meteor shower</b>	<b>Is afraid of snakes</b>	<b>Knows how to sew</b>	<b>Can play basketball</b>

# Training

## Introduction

(15 minutes)

### Welcome Participants to the Training

- Introduce yourself and share your background and experience.
- Announce the length of the training (75–100 minutes) and note other logistics, such as break times, restroom location, and so on.
- Review the agenda and explain the structure of the training.
  - Participants will watch an overview video and then two short videos that explore best practices in creating a learning environment.
  - After each video, participants will briefly discuss the main points and reflect on what they have learned.
  - Participants will also have the opportunity to share and reflect on their own practices.
- Share the learning goals and objectives. Participants will:
  - Explore the best practices for getting families involved in the early childhood learning experience.
  - Learn how to build positive and collaborative relationships with families of early learners.
  - Discover how to help families extend the learning from the early childhood environment to the home.
  - Apply new knowledge to current practices.
- Introduce the Learning Log.
  - The Learning Log includes questions to help participants identify best practices and distill the important points made in each video. The *viewing questions* reinforce ideas from the videos. The *reflection questions* help educators draw connections to their own experiences.
  - The Learning Log can also be used to jot down notes, questions, and ideas.
- Consider doing an icebreaker activity to get participants “warmed up” and ready to learn and interact. (See Icebreakers Ideas for suggestions.)

- Ask each participant to identify a partner to work with during the training and encourage them to share ideas. (You can offer small group discussions if you prefer.)

### Complete the Self-Assessment

Educators grow and hone their skills by continually identifying their own strengths and training needs and reflecting on their own practices.

- Invite participants to complete the first half of the Self-Assessment to help them discover the skills they already possess and to identify those they would like to work on.
- Explain that toward the end of the training, participants will complete the second half of the Self-Assessment to measure their growth and learning.

## Getting Families Involved

(5 minutes)

### Introduce the Topic

Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers. As their child begins formal schooling, a family's participation and support is crucial, both at home and in the early learning environment. The insights and information family members can share with early childhood educators can help shape that child's early learning experience.

Many parents and caregivers are not sure how to contribute in their child's learning. Some are unfamiliar with the education system and the expectations that come along with it. Educators can support families by building positive, collaborative relationships and by giving families strategies to help them extend the learning at home.

When educators and families work together, children experience *instructional coherence*—the messages they hear in the learning environment and at home are the same. Together, educators and families can shape a child's academic success.

### Introduce and View the Video

Introduce the overview video featuring Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College. Use this brief video to set the stage for a discussion of best practices in getting families involved in their child's early learning experience.



"Getting Families Involved"

(approx. 2 min)



## Build Relationships with Families (15–20 minutes)

### Introduce the Best Practice

A child's social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development is strengthened when educators and families work together. When a child sees a positive relationship developing between educators and family, the child recognizes that the important people in his or her life are working together and trust each other, and he or she will do the same. This collaboration also provides a strong foundation for communication about children's learning. To foster family involvement, interactions between educators and families should be positive, purposeful, reciprocal, and consistent.

- **Communicate with families often.** When there is good communication between educators and families, learning is collaborative, accomplishments are acknowledged, problems are recognized, and solutions are provided.
- **Communicate the positive and the negative.** Families will have a better sense of their child's behaviors and accomplishments if all behaviors are reported (not only those that are negative or challenging).
- **Foster two-way communication.** It is as important for the educator to hear from the parent or caregiver what the child is doing at home as it is for the parent or caregiver to hear what the child is doing in the early learning program. Share what children are learning and how parents and caregivers can offer support. Ask for feedback from families about the child's academic and social development outside of the program.
- **Use multiple modes communication.** Create a constant flow of communication. Engage with families in person at drop-off and pick-up; keep a journal for each child that families can read and contribute to, set up a Parent Information Board, write regular newsletters or blog posts, and send emails or text messages.
- **Understand each family's expectations and views about their involvement.** What some parents and caregivers view as family engagement may be different from other parents and caregivers. For example, in some cultures families believe that the most respectful way to treat an educator is not to question, suggest, or share information. Be explicit about the kind of involvement that you expect and welcome from families, but also honor the limits families may want to maintain.
- **Approach the relationship with respect.** Treat the educator and family relationship the way you would treat any important relationship in your life. Work to create a respectful and reciprocal relationship—one in which families feel valued and supported.

### Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants that in this video, they'll see educators use various strategies to build strong relationships with families.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:



"Build Relationships with Families" (approx. 3 min)

- *How do the educators keep families informed of their child's learning and activities?*
- *How do the educators engage with families?*

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked...*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

### Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

#### ***Why is it important for educators to build relationships with families?***

- Families and educators each have unique knowledge about a child.
  - A parent or caregiver can share information with educators about how the child feels, thinks, and learns outside of the formal learning environment.
  - An educator can offer insight about how the child learns and behaves in group situations, as well as on his or her own.
- Strong relationships between educators and families can strengthen children's emotional health. They show children that they can trust the adults in their lives because those adults trust each other.
- Children's academic growth benefits from instructional coherence (when the learning that is happening in the program is supported by learning at home and vice-versa).
- Respectful relationships between educators and families provide children with models for how to create positive relationships with others.

***What are some helpful ways to share information about what children are doing and learning?***

- Set up a Parent Information Board in the drop-off and pick-up area to post learning objectives, key vocabulary words, and explicit examples of ways parents can reinforce the learning. For example, *Today we read a book about scientists. We learned how scientists look, touch, smell, listen to, and learn about the world around them. On your way home, ask your child to look, touch, smell, and listen as he or she practices being a scientist.*
- Use blogs, newsletters, text messages, and social media pages to keep families up-to-date on learning, provide ideas on home connections, share photos, and encourage families to share home experiences with educators.
- Keep a journal for each child. Educators can write weekly entries about each child, highlighting a new project, a new learning, a new challenge, or a new development. Family members can read and contribute to the journal.

**View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

**Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own programs. Ask them to answer the *reflection questions* in the Learning Log.

**Break (optional)****(5–10 minutes)****Help Families Extend the Learning****(15–20 minutes)****Introduce the Best Practice**

Young children need many opportunities to practice and reinforce all that they are learning in their early childhood programs. Educators can help families extend the learning by communicating regularly to families what children are learning and by providing examples of ways to build upon the learning.

- **Provide families with clear and explicit examples** of ways to use key learning strategies and activities at home. For example, say, *We worked on counting by two's today. As you go about your day, ask your child to join you in counting things that come in two, like when putting away pairs of shoes or socks.*

- **Help families establish fun daily routines** that require reading, mathematics, and science strategies, such as singing the “ABCs” when in the car, on the bus, counting placemats while setting the table, observing and predicting while on a walk, and so on.
- **Show families how to naturally integrate learning activities within everyday activities** such as cooking, grocery shopping, and bedtime routines.
- **Provide families with strategies to engage children in conversation** such as asking open-ended questions: *What was your favorite thing you did at school today? What did you eat for lunch today?* This helps build the child’s vocabulary and thinking skills.

### Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants that in this video, they will see educators offer strategies to engage children in learning at home, and how parents and caregivers weave these ideas into everyday activities and routines.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:



"Help Families Extend the Learning" (approx. 2 min)

- *How do the educators help families extend the learning at home?*
- *What role do daily routines play in learning at home?*

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked...*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

### Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

#### ***Why is it important for families to extend the learning at home?***

- When school and families work together on the same skill or strategy, they create instructional coherence, which, in effect, doubles the child’s ability to learn. The child hears the same language, uses the same skills, and learns the same concepts in the learning environment and at home.

- Young children thrive when there is consistency in their lives. When families and educators work together, the child sees and knows that there is consistency, collaboration, and trust between them.

***What suggestions can educators make to families about extending the learning at home?***

- Directly relate the learning to what learning is happening that day (or week) in the early learning program. Children will then experience a clear connection between program activities and home activities. For example,
  - If children are learning how to sort in math, families might be encouraged to elicit their child's help in sorting laundry, utensils, or toys during household chores.
  - If children are learning a particular letter that week, such as the letter "s" and letter sound /s/, families can reinforce the learning during the evening meal preparation by asking their child to find the letter "s" on ingredient packages or to name items on the table that begin with the letter sound /s/.
- Use daily routines to extend the learning at home. For example, during weekly grocery shopping, a parent could have their child sort and count apples as they are placed in a bag, look for particular letters or numbers on signs during a walk, or count flowers as they water the garden.
- Identify organic learning opportunities in everyday activities. For example, if children are focusing on counting in their early learning program, families can integrate counting naturally by encouraging their child to count stairs as they climb or descend, count napkins when setting the table, or count bath toys.
- Engage children in conversation. Young children benefit from lots of talking. Educators can encourage families to engage children in conversation as much as possible and to integrate it naturally into daily routines—in whatever language they are most comfortable with. For example, families can ask children to tell them about their day; about the ways they are stacking blocks, about the illustrations they see in a book, and so on. These interactions work to strengthen children's language and social development.

**View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

**Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own program. Ask them to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

**Try It****(15–20 minutes)**

The Try It activity helps educators plan how to apply new ideas to their own early childhood program. Direct participants' attention to the Try It handout in their respective packets.

**Building a Bridge**

Participants will consider how to get families involved in their early childhood programs.

- Invite participants to break into groups of four.
- Assign a “bridge” to each group. (See the Try It handout for “bridge” activities.)
- Ask each group to read together the scenario for building a bridge between educators and families and have them answer the questions that follow.
- Have each small group share their “bridge” and ideas with the full group.

**Wrap Up****(5–10 minutes)**

- Invite participants to complete the second half of the “Self-Assessment” and then measure their growth and learning.
- Ask participants to look over their notes from the training and jot down three things that they want to remember from today in their Learning Log.
- Invite partners or small groups to meet and share their three “keepers.” Then ask a few participants to share their “keepers” with the larger group.
- Thank participants for attending. Remind them to revisit the video or get activity ideas at Resources for Early Learning: <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/>
- Encourage them to fill out and return the Training Evaluation.

### Glossary

**instructional coherence:** the experience learners have when messages that come from different sources (families and educators, for example) are the same or build on each other

**cognitive development:** the process of knowing, thinking, reasoning, and remembering

**language development:** the process of developing language skills to understand and engage in conversation

**self-regulate:** the ability to regulate or control one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior

**social development:** the ability to use appropriate social skills to communicate and interact with others



## Self-Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Before the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your current comfort level.

**After the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your new comfort level.

1 = Very uncomfortable 2 = Uncomfortable 3 = Neutral 4 = Comfortable 5 = Very comfortable

	Before					After				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>General</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Build positive and collaborative relationships with families.										
Encourage families to participate actively in their child's learning.										
<b>Build Relationships with Families</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Provide families with information about what children are learning.										
Understand the expectations each family has regarding family involvement.										
Use a variety of methods to effectively communicate with every family (e.g., bulletin board, newsletter, blog, emails).										
<b>Help Families Extend the Learning</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Provide families with clear and explicit examples of ways to use key learning strategies and activities at home.										
Tell families how to develop daily routines that incorporate learning experiences.										
Convey to families how to find organic opportunities for learning within everyday activities.										





## Learning Log

### Build Relationships with Families

#### View

In the video:

- *How do the educators keep families informed of their child's learning and activities?*
  
- *How do the educators engage with families?*

#### Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you build positive and collaborative relationships with families?*
  
- *What did you learn that you will put into practice in your own learning environment?*

#### Notes

### Help Families Extend the Learning

#### View

In the video:

- *How do the educators help families extend the learning at home?*
  
- *What role do daily routines play in learning at home?*

#### Reflect

In your program:

- *What strategies do you use to help families actively participate in their child's learning at home?*
  
- *What did you learn that you will put into practice in your own learning environment?*

#### Notes



BRAIN BUILDING IN PROGRESS

Resources for Early Learning

# Getting Families Involved

## Try It

### Building a Bridge

#### How can you get families involved in your early childhood program?

Read the “bridge” activities and answer the question(s) that follow.

##### **Bridge #1**

Design a Family Resource Center with materials on topics that are of interest to families. *What items will you include?*

##### **Bridge #2**

Create a Parent Information Board to build relationships with families. *What information will you include?*

##### **Bridge #3**

Strategize a plan to maintain *regular* communication with families. *What methods of communication will you use? How frequently will you use them?*

##### **Bridge #4**

Consider some obstacles that might prevent families from being more involved. *What are they? How will you address them?*



## Best Practices

Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers. As their child begins formal schooling, a family's participation and support is crucial, both at home and in the early learning environment. The insights and information family members can share with early childhood educators can help shape that child's early learning experience.

Many parents and caregivers are not sure how to contribute in their child's learning. Some are unfamiliar with the education system and the expectations that come along with it. Educators can support families by building positive, collaborative relationships and by giving families strategies to help them extend the learning at home.

When educators and families work together, children experience *instructional coherence*—the messages they hear in the learning environment and at home are the same. Together, educators and families can shape a child's academic success.

## Build Relationships with Families

A child's social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development is strengthened when educators and families work together. When a child sees a positive relationship developing between educators and family, the child recognizes that the important people in his or her life are working together and trust each other, and he or she will do the same. This collaboration also provides a strong foundation for communication about children's learning. To foster family involvement, interactions between educators and families should be positive, purposeful, reciprocal, and consistent.

- **Communicate with families often.** When there is good communication between educators and families, learning is collaborative, accomplishments are acknowledged, problems are recognized, and solutions are provided.
- **Communicate the positive and the negative.** Families will have a better sense of their child's behaviors and accomplishments if all behaviors are reported (not only those that are negative or challenging).
- **Foster two-way communication.** It is as important for the educator to hear from the parent or caregiver what the child is doing at home as it is for the parent or caregiver to hear what the child is doing in the early learning program. Share what children are learning and how parents and caregivers can offer support. Ask for feedback from families about the child's academic and social development outside of the program.
- **Use multiple modes communication.** Create a constant flow of communication. Engage with families in person at drop-off and pick-up; keep a journal for each child that

families can read and contribute to, set up a Parent Information Board, write regular newsletters or blog posts, and send emails or text messages.

- **Understand each family's expectations and views about their involvement.** What some parents and caregivers view as family engagement may be different from other parents and caregivers. For example, in some cultures families believe that the most respectful way to treat an educator is not to question, suggest, or share information. Be explicit about the kind of involvement that you expect and welcome from families, but also honor the limits families may want to maintain.
- **Approach the relationship with respect.** Treat the educator and family relationship the way you would treat any important relationship in your life. Work to create a respectful and reciprocal relationship—one in which families feel valued and supported.

### Why is it important for educators to build relationships with families?

- Families and educators each have unique knowledge about a child.
  - A parent or caregiver can share information with educators about how the child feels, thinks, and learns outside of the formal learning environment.
  - An educator can offer insight about how the child learns and behaves in group situations, as well as on his or her own.
- Strong relationships between educators and families can strengthen children's emotional health. They show children that they can trust the adults in their lives because those adults trust each other.
- Children's academic growth benefits from instructional coherence (when the learning that is happening in the program is supported by learning at home and vice-versa).
- Respectful relationships between educators and families provide children with models for how to create positive relationships with others.

### What are some helpful ways to share information about what children are doing and learning?

- Set up a Parent Information Board in the drop-off and pick-up area to post learning objectives, key vocabulary words, and explicit examples of ways parents can reinforce the learning. For example, *Today we read a book about scientists. We learned how scientists look, touch, smell, listen to, and learn about the world around them. On your way home, ask your child to look, touch, smell, and listen as he or she practices being a scientist.*

- Use blogs, newsletters, text messages, and social media pages to keep families up-to-date on learning, provide ideas on home connections, share photos, and encourage families to share home experiences with educators.
- Keep a journal for each child. Educators can write weekly entries about each child, highlighting a new project, a new learning, a new challenge, or a new development. Family members can read and contribute to the journal.

## Help Families Extend the Learning

Young children need many opportunities to practice and reinforce all that they are learning in their early childhood programs. Educators can help families extend the learning by communicating regularly to families what children are learning and by providing examples of ways to build upon the learning.

- **Provide families with clear and explicit examples** of ways to use key learning strategies and activities at home. For example, say, *We worked on counting by two's today. As you go about your day, ask your child to join you in counting things that come in two, like when putting away pairs of shoes or socks.*
- **Help families establish fun daily routines** that require reading, mathematics, and science strategies, such as singing the "ABCs" when in the car, on the bus, counting placemats while setting the table, observing and predicting while on a walk, and so on.
- **Show families how to naturally integrate learning activities within everyday activities** such as cooking, grocery shopping, and bedtime routines.
- **Provide families with strategies to engage children in conversation** such as asking open-ended questions: *What was your favorite thing you did at school today? What did you eat for lunch today?* This helps build the child's vocabulary and thinking skills.

## Why is it important for families to extend the learning at home?

- When school and families work together on the same skill or strategy, they create instructional coherence, which, in effect, doubles the child's ability to learn. The child hears the same language, uses the same skills, and learns the same concepts in the learning environment and at home.
- Young children thrive when there is consistency in their lives. When families and educators work together, the child sees and knows that there is consistency, collaboration, and trust between them.

**What suggestions can educators make to families about extending the learning at home?**

- Directly relate the learning to what learning is happening that day (or week) in the early learning program. Children will then experience a clear connection between program activities and home activities. For example,
  - If children are learning how to sort in math, families might be encouraged to elicit their child's help in sorting laundry, utensils, or toys during household chores.
  - If children are learning a particular letter that week, such as the letter "s" and letter sound /s/, families can reinforce the learning during the evening meal preparation by asking their child to find the letter "s" on ingredient packages or to name items on the table that begin with the letter sound /s/.
- Use daily routines to extend the learning at home. For example, during weekly grocery shopping, a parent could have their child sort and count apples as they are placed in a bag, look for particular letters or numbers on signs during a walk, or count flowers as they water the garden.
- Identify organic learning opportunities in everyday activities. For example, if children are focusing on counting in their early learning program, families can integrate counting naturally by encouraging their child to count stairs as they climb or descend, count napkins when setting the table, or count bath toys.
- Engage children in conversation. Young children benefit from lots of talking. Educators can encourage families to engage children in conversation as much as possible and to integrate it naturally into daily routines—in whatever language they are most comfortable with. For example, families can ask children to tell them about their day; about the ways they are stacking blocks, about the illustrations they see in a book, and so on. These interactions work to strengthen children's language and social development.

### Glossary

**instructional coherence:** the experience learners have when messages that come from different sources (families and educators, for example) are the same or build on each other

**cognitive development:** the process of knowing, thinking, reasoning, and remembering

**language development:** the process of developing language skills to understand and engage in conversation

**self-regulate:** the ability to regulate or control one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior

**social development:** the ability to use appropriate social skills to communicate and interact with others

View the self-paced video workshop at <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators>.





## Learning Guidelines and Standards

This professional development training module is aligned to Massachusetts standards and guidelines.

### Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

#### Center and School Based:

- **Family and Community Engagement Level 3** A daily two way communication system is available between the educators and families through a variety of means; Families are encouraged to volunteer in the program, to assist in the classroom, and share cultural and language traditions or other interests such as their jobs, hobbies and other relevant information.

#### Family Child Care:

- **Family and Community Engagement Level 2** Educator establishes ongoing communication with other family child care providers in the community or community agencies to exchange information and resources.
- **Family and Community Engagement Level 3** A daily two way communication system is available between the educators and families through a variety of means (e.g. scheduled telephone hour, checklists, e-mail).
- **Family and Community Engagement Level 4** Families are encouraged to volunteer to assist in the program and, with appropriate supervision, share cultural and language traditions or other interests such as their jobs, hobbies and other relevant information.

### National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

#### Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice:

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning B** Teachers make it a priority to know each child well, and also the people most significant in the child's life.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning B.1** Teachers establish positive, personal relationships with each child and with each child's family to better understand that child's individual needs, interests, and abilities and that family's goals, values,

## Standards (continued)

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expectations, and childrearing practices. Teachers talk with each child and family (with a community translator, if necessary, for mutual understanding) and use what they learn to adapt their actions and planning.

- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families A** In reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families, there is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals.
- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families B** Practitioners work in collaborative partnerships with families, establishing and maintaining regular, frequent two-way communication with them (with families who do not speak English, teachers should use the language of the home if they are able or try to enlist the help of bilingual volunteers).
- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families C** Family members are welcome in the setting, and there are multiple opportunities for family participation. Families participate in program decisions about their children's care and education.
- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families D** Teachers acknowledge a family's choices and goals for the child and respond with sensitivity and respect to those preferences and concerns, but without abdicating the responsibility that early childhood practitioners have to support children's learning and development through developmentally appropriate practices.
- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families E** Teachers and the family share with each other their knowledge of the particular child and understanding of child development and learning as part of day-to-day communication and in planned conferences. Teachers support families in ways that maximally promote family decision-making capabilities and competence.
- **(5) Establishing reciprocal relationships with families F** Practitioners involve families as a source of information about the child (before program entry and on an ongoing basis) and engage them in the planning for their child.



## Training Evaluation

Thank you for your participation. Please indicate your impressions of the training below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The training met my expectations.					
I will be able to apply what I have learned.					
The trainer was knowledgeable.					
The training was organized and easy to follow.					
Participation and interaction was encouraged.					
The handouts were pertinent and useful.					

### 1. How would you rate this training overall?

*Excellent*

*Good*

*Average*

*Poor*

### 2. What was most beneficial to you in this training?

### 3. What suggestions do you have to improve this training?