# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

## Equitable Family-School Partnerships to Support High Early Literacy Outcomes

Prepared for the Michigan Department of Education by the Region 8 Comprehensive Center

# CONTENTS

# Session Goal, Outcomes, and Agenda

## Session Goal

To increase the capacity of participants to support educators' effective use of the Michigan Department of Education's resources for equitable family-school partnerships to achieve high early literacy outcomes.

## Outcomes

Participants will leave the session with:

- An increased understanding of the shift from traditional family involvement to equitable family-school partnerships that achieve high early literacy outcomes.

- The ability to explain the benefits of and practices for overcoming barriers to equitable family-school literacy partnerships that achieve high early literacy outcomes.

- The ability to articulate the benefits of using the *Prekindergarten Through Third Grade Equitable Family-School Literacy Partnership* resources to increase family-school literacy partnerships to support high early literacy outcomes.

- The ability to articulate the ways that these resources can be used to support high early literacy outcomes.

- Ideas for disseminating and supporting others in the use of these resources through intentional planning.
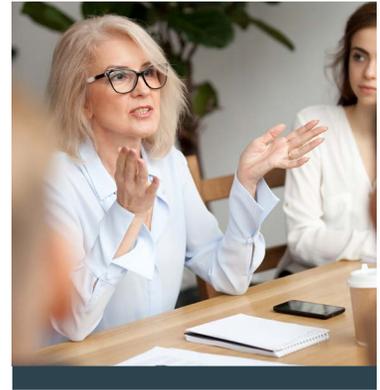
## Agenda

(Superscripts indicate the time allocated for each section of the agenda.)

- The Goal, Learning Outcomes, and Agenda for this Session[10]

- Exploration of the What, Why, and How of Equitable Family–School Partnerships[58]

- Break[10]

- Exploration of How to Establish and Sustain Equitable Family–School Literacy Partnerships[10]

- Exploration of the Content, Use, and Benefits of the *Prekindergarten–Third Grade Equitable Family–School Partnership* Literacy Resources[27]

- Break[10]

- Dissemination of Resources[25]

- Final Reflections[5]
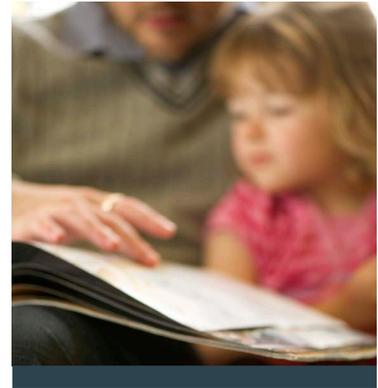
# Activities

## Why is family engagement important?

Purpose

· Understand the benefits of family engagement.

Directions

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on *why* you believe family engagement is important. Record your answer below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# What is family engagement?

## Purpose

- Define family engagement.

## Directions

1. Introduce yourself with your name, role, and office or school.

2. In round robin fashion, share your definition of family engagement. There should be no cross talk. (Later in this session, you will return to the definition you wrote.)

3. As you listen to people's definitions, listen for common themes.

4. When everyone has had a chance to read their definition of family engagement, spend a few moments talking about the themes that you heard.
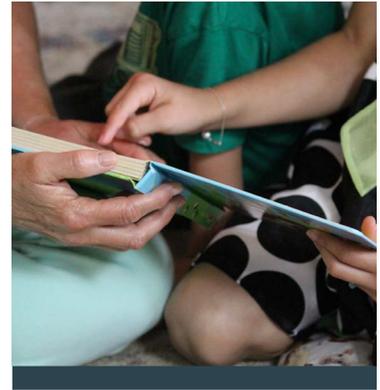
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# How is family engagement different than traditional family involvement?

## Purpose

- Construct a joint understanding of how family engagement is different than traditional family involvement.

## Directions

1. Compare your previous family engagement definition above to the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) and revise it, if necessary, and/or underline key words or commonalities between the definitions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# How is family engagement different than traditional family involvement?

## Purpose

- Construct a joint understanding of how family engagement is different than traditional family involvement.

## Directions

1. Respond to the following reflection questions:

    a. What changes, if any, did you make to your family engagement definition and why?

    b. Based on the principles in the MiFamily Engagement Framework, how is the Michigan Department of Education's vision of family engagement different than traditional family involvement?

_____

_____

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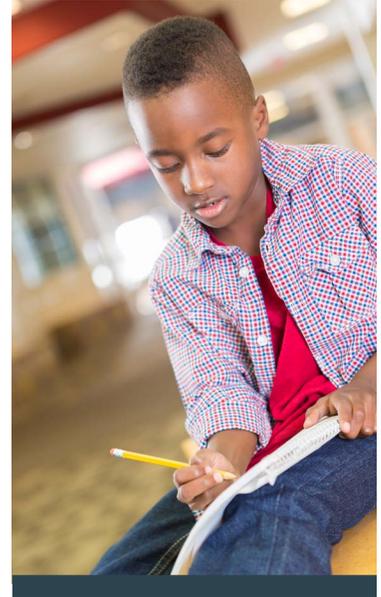
# What does equity mean for family-school partnerships?

## Purpose

- Understand the concept of "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors."

- Explore the definitions of equitable family-school partnerships.

  » *Equitable family-school partnerships focus on **meaningful** engagement activities and systems between schools and families that **do not characterize or treat specific parent groups as deficient** in their levels of engagement or approach to education.*

  » *Equitable family-school partnerships include specific practices or approaches that **reflect the values** of a general group of families, as well as systems that foster **tailored** supports, **flexible** engagement options, and **coordination** between families and schools.*

  Day, 2013; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014
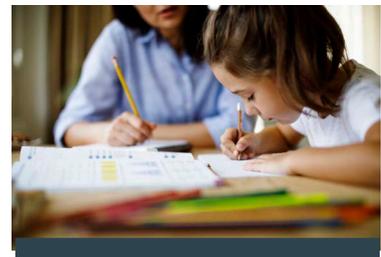
## Directions

1. Use the space below to take notes on the concept of "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors."

_____

_____

_____

2. Use the space below to take notes on the concepts of "equitable family–school partnerships."

_____

_____

_____

3. Reflections on the concepts above:

_____

_____

_____

# What are the barriers to equitable family-school partnerships?

## Purpose

- Identify barriers that impact equitable family-school partnerships.

## Directions

We have discussed the definition and benefits of equitable family-school partnerships. To ensure that engagement with families is based on equitable practices, you also need to identify and dismantle the barriers that impact successful partnerships.

Reflect on and jot down:

1. Any barriers that may impact family-school partnerships. Specifically, focus on barriers that impact historically marginalized families or those living in disinvested communities.


2. How traditional notions of family involvement may have created barriers for families.

_____

_____

_____

3. What do you notice about your list when compared with the one presented?

_____

_____

_____

# How do you establish and sustain equitable family-school partnerships?

## Purpose

- Learn about effective equitable family engagement practices.
- Learn how to assess the implementation of Equitable Family Engagement Practices in one's own learning environment.

## Directions

(The following activity is a powerful one to take back to do with your colleagues, team, or working group.)

1. Review the list of equitable family practices below.

2. Assess how well you believe those practices are implemented in your district or school.

| In my district/school/team, staff … | Almost Always | Often | Sometimes | Almost Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Treat families as equal partners. | | | | |
| 2. Celebrate and honor families' strengths, funds of knowledge, and assets for learning. | | | | |
| 3. Use frequent forms of communication to reach all families. | | | | |
| 4. Gather feedback on a variety of topics and use a feedback loop so that families understand their impact. | | | | |
| 5. Provide materials/resources in all languages represented within the school. | | | | |
| 6. Provide families with a variety of options to be involved and make decisions. | | | | |
| 7. Find creative solutions to conflicts regarding time, language, and social barriers. | | | | |
| 8. Are provided with professional learning on bias and cultural humility. | | | | |
| 9. Consult with cultural stakeholders in the community. | | | | |

3. Describe one practice that is a strength that you have observed. What does it look like and sound like? How do you think it is working?

_____

_____

_____

4. Describe an area that needs improvement. How might you make improvements?

_____

_____

_____

## Reflection

5. Write your reaction to the "What, Why, and How" of equitable family-school literacy partnerships.

_____

_____

_____

# How can equitable family-school partnerships promote Prekindergarten Through Third Grade literacy development?

## Purpose

- Understand the essential components and practices that make up family-school partnerships that promote Prekindergarten Through Third Grade literacy development. [See the Literacy Essentials here.]

### Promoting Prekindergarten Through Third Grade Literacy Development Through Equitable Family-School Partnerships

MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework Guiding Principles —
Relationships, Partnerships, Learner-driven, Tailored to All, Positive Learning Environments

FAMILIES    SCHOOLS

ENVIRONMENT

- Promote Reading Aloud or Independent Reading and Speak in the Most Comfortable Language.

- Read Alouds

COMMUNICATION

- Incorporate Literacy-Promoted Strategies into Everyday Activities and Encourage Literacy Milestones.

- Writing

RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

- Provide Literacy-Supporting Resources and Support Learning in the Summer.

- Abundance of Reading Material and Opportunities

**HIGH EARLY LITERACY OUTCOMES**

## Reflection

1. How might you use the conceptual framework to explain how equitable family–school literacy partnerships promote high early literacy outcomes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## What are some of the benefits of equitable family-school partnerships for high early literacy outcomes? How can the resources help reap these benefits?

### Purpose

- Explore and become familiar with the content and structure of the resources.
- Determine some of the benefits of using the resources to increase equitable family–school literacy partnerships for high early literacy outcomes.

### Benefits of Equitable Family-School Partnerships

- Shared literacy goals and expectations between families and schools.
- Greater insight into students' literacy identities, skills, histories, and perspectives.
- Improved ability to recognize problematic labels and bias.
- Increased culturally responsive literacy instruction for all students.
- Improved ability to interrupt the processes that create distrustful students and families.

### Directions

1. In small groups of four, you will pair off and be given 12 minutes to read your assigned resource. One pair will read Leadership Strategy 1: Create a School Environment to Support Family–School Literacy Partnerships. The other pair will review the Read Alouds for Kindergarten Through Third Grade brief and the Read Alouds for K–Third Grade infographic.

2. As you read your assigned resource, take note of the content and structure of the resource. Also, as you review the resource, write down any additional benefits, beyond those listed above, of using the resources to increase equitable family–school literacy partnerships for high early literacy outcomes.

3. When you rejoin your full group, you and your partner will have 6 minutes to share the content and structure of your assigned resource with your small group, and the other two members of the group will also have 6 minutes to share the content and structure of their assigned resource with you. Within your small group, each pair will also share some of the benefits of using the resource to increase equitable family–school literacy partnerships for high early literacy outcomes during their 6 minutes of sharing time.

1. Content of your assigned resource:

_____

_____

_____

2. Structure of your assigned resource:

_____

_____

_____

3. Notes from small group sharing:

_____

_____

_____

4. Take a moment to list the benefits of using the resources you discussed in this activity.

_____

_____

_____

5. Write down three or four ways that you can see these resources being used to increase equitable family–school literacy partnerships for high early literacy outcomes.

_____

_____

_____

# How can you effectively share these resources with others to support their use?

## Purpose

- Prepare to effectively share the resources widely and ensure ongoing use.

## Directions

1. Create a list of the different groups/individuals with whom you would like to share these resources.

_____

_____

_____

2. Select one group from the list above to begin planning how you will share the resource.

_____

3. Follow along as the presenter walks through the example planning template on the next page to learn how to complete your own template on page 18 of this Playbook for the group selected above.

*Sample: Considerations for Effectively Sharing the Resources*

| What groups or individuals are you connected with? | What are the ways you communicate with them? | How will the group or individual engage with the resources? | What are potential challenges or barriers to using the resources? | What are questions the group or individual may have about the resources? | How will you respond to those challenges and questions? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Example:**<br><br>**Head Start Programs** | · Newsletters<br><br>· Website<br><br>· Listserv<br><br>· Directors' meetings<br><br>· Weekly webinars | · Teachers can use these in the classroom.<br><br>· Programs can share infographics with parents.<br><br>· Teachers can share infographics during conferences or family events.<br><br>· Centers can have these available in waiting areas. | · Language differences<br><br>· Access to online versions<br><br>· Lack of paper resources to print for teachers and families<br><br>· Little or no follow-through or up-front support for teachers and families | · How do I know whether I am doing this correctly?<br><br>· Are these available in another language?<br><br>· Who should be in charge of sharing these with families?<br><br>· How do I support families once I share this with them? | · Provide workshops for families.<br><br>· Share any available translations or help translate with Google Translate or a similar app.<br><br>· Determine policies and procedures for use at the program level.<br><br>· Provide continued learning opportunities for families. |

## Directions:

1. Complete this planning template for the group/individual you and your small group selected from your lists. You should have all columns completed for your selected group by the end of this activity.

2. If you have time and would like to plan for other groups/individuals, there is an additional row for you to use.

*Considerations for Effectively Sharing the Resources*

| What groups or individuals are you connected with? | What are the ways you communicate with them? | How will the group or individual engage with the resources? | What are potential challenges or barriers to using the resources? | What are questions the group or individual may have about the resources? | How will you respond to those challenges and questions? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

## Action Plan (First Steps)

3. Choose one of the individuals or groups listed in your template that you will be meeting with soon and with whom you are likely to share these resources.

Group selected: _____

4. Identify the first two or three steps you will take to share and support that group's use of the resources.

_____

_____

_____

## Reflection

Take a moment to respond to the following questions in writing:

1. How might you integrate today's ideas into pre-existing plans for sharing or using these resources?

_____

_____

_____

2. How does your list of questions, challenges, and use of resources compare to other participants' lists?

_____

_____

_____

# Final reflections

Things to remember and remaining questions.

## Directions

Take a few minutes to reflect on the day by answering the questions below:

1. What squares with your beliefs?

_____

_____

_____

2. What is still circling around in your head?

_____

_____

_____

3. What are three things you want to be sure to remember?

_____

_____

_____

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CCNETWORK
Comprehensive Center Network

REGION 8
Indiana
Michigan
Ohio

# APPENDIX

The resources listed below were developed by the MDE literacy team with assistance from the federally funded Region 8 Comprehensive Center to support educators in building family-school partnerships to enhance students' literacy development at school and at home. The evidence-based briefs for school leaders and teachers, in tandem with the infographic one-pagers for families, are intended to assist schools with their work in building families' capacity to engage effectively in literacy-based activities with their children. All resources are available on the Michigan Department of Education's website.

*Resources for Administration*

Leadership Strategy 1
Leadership Strategy 2
Leadership Strategy 3

*Resources for Prekindergarten*

Provision of Abundant Reading Materials for Prekindergarten
Read Alouds for Prekindergarten
Interactions Around Writing for Prekindergarten

Family Infographic: Opportunities to Read for Prekindergartners
Family Infographic: Read Alouds for Prekindergartners
Family Infographic: Writing for Prekindergartners

*Resources for K–3*

Abundant Reading Materials and Reading Opportunities for Grades K–3
Read Alouds for Grades K–3
Writing for Grades K–3

Family Infographic: Opportunities to Read for Grades K–3
Family Infographic: Read Alouds for Grades K–3
Family Infographic: Writing for Grades K–3