



MISSISSIPPI

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

TOOLKIT



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The strategies and activities provided in this document directly align to the four goals of the Mississippi Family Engagement Framework. The members of the family engagement coalition and data from focus groups identified strategies and activities to support sustainable family engagement efforts in learning communities. While these strategies and activities are not comprehensive, it provides a solid foundation and starting point from which to further strengthen family engagement efforts. Please feel free to modify or adjust any of the activities to meet the needs of families in your learning community.

The framework establishes a set of goals, outcomes, resources, and activities to effectively promote family engagement in high quality learning environments. The framework demonstrates the natural progression of transitioning from early learning settings to formalized school settings by creating a structure for educators that influences family-friendly schools to support student academic achievement, development, and success. Family engagement strategies must be initiated and implemented with a solid foundation. As state educators work to support families with young children, they should target these specific family engagement goals. A continuous systems approach will work together to achieve the ultimate child outcomes for successful lifelong learners.

Each section of the framework provides guidance of how family engagement outcomes for programs lead to family outcomes, which lead to successful child outcomes. As a result, those observed family interactions can produce positive outcomes in child behavior, social/emotional development, and school success.

GOALS

1. Welcome and Empower ALL Families
2. Increase Student Success
3. Build Leadership and Capacity
4. Develop Community Investment and Partnerships



STRATEGIES

for Effective Family Engagement Implementation

The goals outlined above summarize the areas that family engagement initiatives at the state, district, and local level should address. In this section, strategies are provided that can be used by educators to meet the goals. These strategies are organized in a similar way to the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.

Strategies are offered to support the foundational areas of a program, which include leadership and professional development. In addition, strategies are also offered to support family engagement initiatives at the program or educators “foundational impact” areas. These foundation areas include program environment, teaching and learning, family partnerships, and community partnerships. A wide variety of strategies are offered that are applicable in multiple settings, including school districts, pre-k programs, family child care, center-based child care, public pre-kindergarten programs, and Head Start programs.

IMPACT AREA **Program Leadership**



- Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous implementation, high quality learning environments, and partnerships related to supporting family well-being and positive caregiver–child relationships.
- Develop relationships with community members and community organizations that support families’ interests and needs.
- Ensure staff members have appropriate training and effective supervision to support families and their relationships throughout the continuum of the developing child.
- Establish a reciprocal relationship with early intervention services and school systems to support and empower families in their continued role as their child’s lifelong educators.
- Form agreements with education entities and organizations that support staff and families’ education. Ensure that families’ opinions are heard and included in the program planning processes (e.g., policy council and focus groups).

IMPACT AREA **Professional Development**



- Develop knowledge of relationship building that is grounded in cross-cultural responsiveness and strengths-based perspectives.
- Reflect on daily practice and personal experience to increase self- awareness and effective relationship building with families.
- Develop knowledge of professional ethics in the areas of confidentiality, boundaries, and self-determination.
- Develop skills in coordination and collaboration with community partners.
- Gain knowledge about: the needs of prenatal and postnatal women and their families; child development and caregiving practices; family financial literacy and financial stability; parenting a child with a disability; engaging caregivers; how mental health and wellness affects families; trauma and its effect on relationships; communication styles; and relationship building.
- Include teachers and teacher assistants in family education sessions so families and teachers can share information about child development and program curriculum.
- Create “professional learning communities” for staff.
- Develop staff skills to support families to meet their learning goals.

Professional Development *(continued)*

- Develop knowledge about different kinds of education and training opportunities available to families.
- Prepare staff to engage families in appropriate ways at all times.
- Conduct joint transition trainings across state and local educational agencies.
- Gain understanding about the operations of early intervention services, public schools and the early care and education learning community and acknowledge the constraints and opportunities in building local partnerships (differences in policy, regulations, budgets, organizational design, etc.).
- Conduct staff trainings about how to encourage family leadership and advocacy and facilitate activities that help families enhance caregiver–child relationships, strengthen their role as educators, reflect and set learning goals, and prepare for transitions.
- Create safe and respectful environments where adults—staff and families—can learn from each other and ask for the kinds of information that they find helpful as individuals and members of a group.
- Provide space and resources for monthly events chaired by families, for families.
- Provide training on multicultural principles, leadership development, and advocacy for staff and families.

IMPACT AREA **High Quality Program Environment**



- Welcome ALL families - all family structures, sizes, and arrangements.
- Initiate relationships with families that are receptive, responsive, and respectful.
- Include family-friendly spaces with pictures and materials that affirm, welcome and accept all families.
- Engage in honest dialogue with families about their expectations and staff/program objectives.
- Hold the child and family in high regard and partner effectively with all families.
- Provide opportunities that support families' needs to connect with other families for reflection, information, ideas, and support.
- Support caregiver–child relationships in a way that values the culture and language of the family and recognizes how cultural influences impact family development.
- Welcome families to observe and participate in their child's classroom or home-based activities.
- Support and encourage families to share tips on everyday learning practices with staff and other families.

High Quality Program Environment *(continued)*

- Make information available that supports adults' personal growth and career development.
- Ensure that family focused meetings and trainings are announced routinely, that announcements are inviting, and that language is not a barrier to caregiver participation.
- Provide opportunities for families to connect with other families in the program or community who have similar personal or professional goals.
- Welcome and engage families as partners in transition planning.
- Help families identify and understand quality criteria in early childhood settings as children make transitions from prenatal to postnatal services, new service options, new classrooms, or new home visitors.
- Create an environment that welcomes and affirms leadership and advocacy in the program.
- Work with families to arrive at agreed upon understandings of how to partner and how to collaborate with each other within the program.

IMPACT AREA **Family Partnerships**



- Help families identify their interests, articulate their strengths and needs, and accomplish and/or develop goals.
- Use goal-oriented home visits to establish relationships with families and to identify and support their interests and needs.
- Assist families in using resources and systems of support as necessary and appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for families to learn about expectant mother roles and prenatal health, the developing role of young families (for adolescent caregivers), the extended family, and/or about their roles as caregivers.
- Foster meaningful, reciprocal relationships between caregivers and a child in a manner that is culturally receptive and responsive.
- Help families identify appropriate practices that complement the stages of their developing child.
- Help families ensure the health and safety of developing children in their care.
- Support caregivers to connect with and be responsible for children at all ages and stages of development.

Family Partnerships *(continued)*

- Support families as they seek support from mental health consultants or other community agencies when there are caregiver–child relationship challenges that require additional services.
- Foster strong co-caregiver relationships when appropriate.
- Assist families to develop their own education and training goals and provide referrals to educational resources (GED, adult education, ESL, employment opportunities, workplace literacy, caregiving skills, job training, job preparation skills, etc.) to link families to the necessary supports to further their education/training.
- Invite past program families and community volunteers to share their educational and career experiences with new families.
- Invite families to volunteer or apply for jobs in the program that support their caregiving practices, career or life goals. Support families’ interests and goals by referring them to volunteer opportunities in the program and community.
- Help families develop transition plans for themselves and their children.
- Make sure that families are aware of services and know about their rights under federal and state laws, including their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Family Partnerships *(continued)*

- Facilitate or refer families to support and/or educational groups where they can share their concerns (e.g., children's special needs, divorce, a death in the family, co-caregiver).
- Talk with families about their formal and informal social networks (family, neighborhood, school, recreation, etc.) and explore interests or needs in forming new or renewing old social connections.
- Individualize opportunities for peer-to-peer connections for different groups of family members.
- Provide opportunities for families to identify their strengths as leaders/advocates and to use them in the program and community.
- Share information with families about existing family organizations, family peer networks and/or family-initiated school- community efforts in order to foster continuity in leadership and advocacy roles.
- Provide mentoring opportunities for families that could include staff, alumni families, elders, and professionals in the community to serve as a resource and support for family leadership development.
- Partner with families to engage advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family, and community needs or on other issues of interest to families.
- Form partnerships with organizations to facilitate connections for families.

IMPACT AREA **Community Investment and Partnerships**



- Link families with support systems, peer-to-peer groups, and resources.
- Participate in community meetings and initiatives that increase program capacity to respond to the needs and interests of families.
- Support family experiences with community resources that support children’s learning and development, such as libraries and museums.
- Share information with families about resources and services for children with disabilities and special health needs.
- Collaborate with community organizations that share families’ concerns and interests.
- Form partnerships with educational resources in the community and beyond, including higher education institutions, to support families’ learning interests and educational goals.
- Form partnerships with adult educators who creatively enhance education and training opportunities for families.
- Coordinate services for children and families as they transition from one early childhood setting to another, private or public, child care or elementary school.
- Provide training and opportunities for families to develop and use advocacy skills in the context of their child’s lifelong learning and in other ways of interest to the whole family.

ACTIVITIES







Bilingual Story Time

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—3rd grade

DURATION 45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Felt pieces, flash cards, books, felt boards

DESCRIPTION

The program encourages celebrating others' differences and learning a “new” language. Some children who attend the bilingual story time are English speakers whose families want them to learn another language. Non-English speaking children often attend the bilingual story time to hear stories in their native language. The interaction of the children, both non-English speaking, allows for the fostering of community and the celebration of differences in others.

Have a family member of a child who is bilingual read a book and talk about their culture.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Children pick up new languages easily.
- Children are not embarrassed to point out others differences, which can be difficult to address in an appropriate way.
- Check with your local library for resources.



English Learners Family Night

LEVEL	Intermediate	TARGET AUDIENCE Families of English learner students
COST	Low	
		DURATION 1–1.5 hours
		MATERIALS NEEDED Sign-in sheet, any school handouts, Family Welcome Sheet

DESCRIPTION

Provide a family night lead by a bilingual facilitator (for the language that most of your EL students speak). The facilitator could lead a tour of the school and introduce parents to faculty and staff who will be working with their children. This will assist families in feeling more comfortable with the school and encourage them to participate more in the school activities. It also helps families understand the US school system and school expectations for students and parents.

A Family Welcome Sheet for families of EL students is provided on the MDE EL web page. This is a document that schools can use to input information related to their school.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



If the school does not have an interpreter, consideration should be made to partner with local universities, colleges or businesses to aid in this interpretation service.



Salute to Special Skills

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade and Educators

DURATION 1 hour per session

MATERIALS NEEDED This will depend on what kinds of activities families share. To keep from excluding families where finances may prohibit them from participating, PTA/PTO, school adopters, or other funding sources can be used to provide materials for these activities.

DESCRIPTION

Schools can ask families to sign up to share a special skill they have with classes or grade levels. Sessions can be held monthly at a specified date/time, or as part of small groups or centers as they fit into a classroom theme. This provides an opportunity for families who may not be able to support the school academically or financially still feel like a valued part of the school community by demonstrating their skills.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Some families may feel more comfortable doing their activity for a small group.
- Offer flexibility to meet at times that are convenient to family members.



Celebrate Development

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Teachers and Families with children birth—Kindergarten

DURATION 1 hour, quarterly

MATERIALS NEEDED “Learn the Signs. Act Early.”
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

DESCRIPTION

Celebrating development should always be at the forefront of what we do. Utilizing developmental monitoring materials, educators can "celebrate" with families as children reach developmental milestones. Highlighting development helps to support families' understanding of how their child is developing and provides a gateway to discuss any concerns families and teachers have.

To "Celebrate Development", teachers must simply note and make families aware of the developmental milestone. This simple practice allows teachers to be creative in acknowledging children's development. Encourage families to track development monthly.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Every child can be celebrated.
- Be knowledgeable of culture differences.



All About Me: The Next Level

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—3rd grade
COST	Low	
		DURATION 30 minutes or longer
		MATERIALS NEEDED Family pictures, tape or glue, poster board, markers

DESCRIPTION

This activity focuses on bringing families together. The lesson focuses on learning/understanding the importance of families and allows children the opportunity to share part of who they are with their classmates.

Families are invited to come and introduce their family members, cultural customs (food, clothing, etc.) and any other information they would like to share. During the presentation, children pass around items for each of their classmates to explore. At the end, family members post all materials to a poster board that will be displayed within the classroom.



Families are Their Child's First Teacher

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	High

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children birth—Kindergarten

DURATION 4—6 weeks

MATERIALS NEEDED A research-based parenting curriculum that is designed to promote positive family outcomes.

DESCRIPTION

The curriculum should be focused on child development and family well-being (beliefs, discipline, values), providing families the opportunity to share their experiences (without any judgment) to promote parental openness, and then offer other options or actions to enhance or change their behaviors individually or in the guidance of their family. The curriculum should offer guidance to family members to observe and experience and understand with clarity what they may do to promote positive relationships and advocacy.

The outcomes that would be measurable: (1) improved health outcomes, family member involvement (2) individual understanding of approaches to address positive and challenging situations, meaning

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



- There are many curriculum/parenting interventions available that are research and evidenced based. The curriculum should be selected that best serves the culture and community of the families represented at the school. It should address family strengths and challenges.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

there should be dialogue between administration and staff with the family at school (3) the child's social-emotional perspective, how the child's approaches with fellow students and the teacher and his/her approaches to classroom tasks.

THINGS TO CONSIDER
(continued)



- The school district will refer the families to community resources that offer services to assist families regarding health and family stability.



Strengthening Families Framework

LEVEL	Intermediate	TARGET AUDIENCE Educators, Counselors, Families with children birth—Kindergarten
COST	Low	
		DURATION 2–4 hours
		MATERIALS NEEDED Large room for participants, tables, chairs, projector, handouts

DESCRIPTION

Many factors influence a child’s development, including early experiences with families and caregivers. Children exposed to adverse experiences are at risk for biological and social disadvantages throughout their life span. Adverse experiences include poverty, abuse, neglect, and familial stressors such as substance abuse and domestic violence. These experiences are correlated with below average literacy and language skills, which may affect the overall academic performance of a child.

The goal of the workshop provided by Strengthening Families-MS (SF-MS) and the CDC’s Learn the Signs. Act Early (LTSAE) Ambassador to MS (Dr. Leslie LaVergne) is to educate and inform service providers about (1) developmental monitoring

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



Funding for SF-MS is pending at this time. The final decision from the funder will be announced November 2018. However, Dr. Leslie LaVergne is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” (LTSAE) program and can provide training regarding developmental monitoring in the place of the Strengthening Families Framework.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

with the (LTSAE) curriculum; and (2) systematically integrating the 5 protective factors of the SF-MS into the culture of the family and community. These protective factors are as follows: (a) parental resilience, (b) social/community connections, (c) knowledge of parenting and child development, (d) concrete support in times of need, and (e) social and emotional competence of children.



Coffee with the Director or Coffee with the Principal

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade
COST	Moderate	
		DURATION Throughout the year
		MATERIALS NEEDED Coffee, tea, water

DESCRIPTION

Allow families an opportunity to sit down informally and meet the principal or center director and talk. This allows families to ask questions, state concerns, and find out about the school or center.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Multiple families can attend at one time.
- Post dates in advance for sign-ups.



Daily Diary

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK— 6th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Notebook

DESCRIPTION

These notebooks, kept in children’s backpacks, are an excellent way to send messages to and from school and home regarding a child’s progress/questions/suggestions/concerns/praise. Teachers write a note and families write a note. This creates a feedback loop of conversation.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Have interpreter help families whose first language is not English.



On the Road Meet and Greet

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 1—3 days

MATERIALS NEEDED School bus or van, school supply lists, curriculum information, important dates, newsletters, teacher’s and administrator’s contact information

DESCRIPTION

Take school information on the road. Send a school bus or van filled with school/program staff around the neighborhoods of the students. Staff and families can meet before the start of the school year.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- See if churches or community centers in the families’ neighborhoods will host the location for the meet and greet.
- Meet families where they are rather than expecting them to always come to the schools.



Family Suggestion Box

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Box, paper, writing utensil

DESCRIPTION

Place the suggestion box in a clearly visible and accessible location. Post a friendly, brief notice near the box inviting suggestions. These suggestions can be anonymous or families can leave their name. Remind families that it is easier to follow up on suggestions if the school can contact them directly if clarification is needed.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- It is essential to let families know what suggestions the school receives and how the school plans to respond.
- Variations: ask for compliments, concerns, and ideas.
- Consider having a digital suggestion box.



Class Photo Album

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Photo albums, smart phone or camera

DESCRIPTION

Create a photo album of your classroom in action. Pictures of children involved in different activities can be a wonderful way to engage families when they visit the classroom. Teachers, family members, and children can talk more about what is happening in the photos. Provide picture captions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Consider the privacy of families, and ask permission before taking and sharing pictures of children.



Family Talent Show

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 1 afternoon or evening

MATERIALS NEEDED Decorations, information fliers, registration forms

DESCRIPTION

Make families and children feel like stars of the show with this simple talent show. Families and children practice at home and come out and shine.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Use a local theatre or school auditorium.



Family Information Station and Family Place

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low - Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Bulletin Board

DESCRIPTION

Create a display board for families to keep them updated and informed. It should be visible to families as they come and go. Families should be encouraged to visit your school/program. When they arrive, be prepared for their visit. Provide a welcoming spot when they arrive to visit or assist at your site.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Information Station—program information, pictures, news about families, upcoming events, calendar, contact information for other families, thank you announcements.
- Family Place—designated parking space, place to sit, place to store personal items, name tag, family restroom.



Welcome Letter or Postcard

LEVEL

Easy

COST

Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—6th grade

DURATION Beginning of the school year

MATERIALS NEEDED Postage, stationary

DESCRIPTION

Prior to the start of the school year, teachers send children and their families a welcome postcard or letter. It may include upcoming events, teacher biography, supply list, and other classroom information.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Address the letter to the child.
- Include picture of the teacher, classroom pet, or classroom.

ACTIVITIES







Helping Children Understand Stories

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—Kindergarten

DURATION 10—20 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Book of student's interest, paper, pencils, crayons or markers

DESCRIPTION

Read a book with your child (this can be in English or the language you speak at home if it is other than English). After reading the book, discuss the main events in the story by asking your child about the beginning, middle and end of the story or about the characters, setting and ideas. This can be extended to other familiar stories. Additional extensions might include encouraging students to draw pictures of the characters in the story, or create a story of their own by drawing a picture and telling you a story about the picture.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



For a variety of books, check with your child's teacher for books that can be borrowed from the classroom. Additionally, books can be borrowed from your local public library or family resource center. Often times, local libraries also provide activities such as story hour or puppet activities that encourage students to engage in activities related to reading and literacy.



Book Swap

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of Preschoolers

DURATION On a monthly basis throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Age appropriate books (new or used) and staffing

DESCRIPTION

The school/program provides a book swap where children can return books and pick out new ones to encourage reading and to help negate the “summer slide”. These books are given to the children for their home library or to return to obtain new ones. There are no fees associated with kept books. Books are kept in bins by reading/grade level for ease of selection. Generally, the swaps are conducted at the school/program entrance with the support of volunteering school/program staff.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Include books in other languages for English learner families.



Book Sharing - Teaching Families Effective Ways to Read to Their Children

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children ages 3-5 years old

DURATION Varies

MATERIALS NEEDED Various books, flannel board, flannel story pieces, puppets, props, paper and crayons

DESCRIPTION

To begin, families will read a book of their choice. They will have the option of creating a flannel board story, drawing a picture of the story and/or acting out the story. The family member should be at the child's level to make eye contact. The families are encouraged to practice open-ended questions to create healthy discussion. The family members should also follow their child's lead.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Make sure books are age appropriate and adjust lessons for children with special needs if necessary.



Author! Author!

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children Kindergarten—3rd grade

DURATION As long as needed

MATERIALS NEEDED Pencils, crayons or markers, writing paper, cardboard or heavy paper, construction paper, safety scissors, yarn or ribbon

DESCRIPTION

Write with your child. Talk with him/her about your writing so that he/she begins to understand that writing means something and has many uses. Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Offer to write notes there for your child. Be sure that he/she finds notes left there for them.

Help your child write notes or e-mails to relatives and friends to thank them for gifts or to share his/her thoughts. Encourage the relatives and friends to answer your child.

As your child gets older, he/she can begin to write you longer stories.

Ask questions that will help him/her organize the stories.

Answer questions about spelling.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



Writing helps children to organize their thoughts and gives them an important way to communicate with others.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

Help your child turn their writing into books. Paste their drawings and writings on pieces of construction paper. For each book, have them make a cover out of heavier paper or cardboard, then add special art, a title and his/her name as author. Punch holes in the pages and cover and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon.



Can You Top This?

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children 5–7 years old

DURATION As long as needed

MATERIALS NEEDED Imaginations

DESCRIPTION

Learning to take turns helps your child build spoken language skills as well as learn to work with others. With your child, make up a story for the two of you to tell together, taking turns saying one sentence at a time. Begin by deciding on a topic, such as pirates. Say the first sentence: “Once upon a time a pirate lived in . . .” Continue taking turns with your child making up and telling parts of the story until you decide to end it—maybe after eight or ten sentences. Take turns beginning and finishing a story. Ask other family members and friends to join in the story telling.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Write the story as it is being told to show words as written language.



Family Literacy Night

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families within Title I School Districts

DURATION 1 hour (3- 20 min sections)

MATERIALS NEEDED Appropriate books to read, books to give away, craft materials, and snacks

DESCRIPTION

Family Literacy Night is conducted at each site once a month with a theme. Families are welcomed, and then the children move to a story time area where a reader shares stories and sings. The family members often meet with community resource representatives from the Library, YMCA, Social Services, and others.

Tips for Organizing your own Literature Day

- Literature Day can take a great deal of planning and shopping!
- Organize age appropriate activities that appeal to children/students.
- Activity sessions can run from 45-60 minutes.
- Sessions should be limited to 15 children and 15 parents.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



- It helps to have reading specialists, media specialists, and teachers select appropriate literature materials.
- Consider creating a book based on the stories and read at school the next day.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

- Have teachers fill out activity planning sheets that include the grade level for the activity; the book to be used (title, author, illustrator, publisher, and copyright); a list of needed supplies and a brief description of the plan.
- Sample literature activities are: cooking, music/movement, arts and crafts, drama, game playing, and writing. Offer sign-up for evening activities to take place before the literature night begins.



It's a Match

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children 5–7 years old

DURATION As long as needed

MATERIALS NEEDED Dishes, flatware, glasses, or laundry

DESCRIPTION

As you dry the dishes, ask your child to make stacks of dishes that are the same size, to put glasses that are the same size together and to sort forks, knives and spoons.

As you empty the clothes dryer, ask your child to match pairs of socks or to put all of the same colored things together. Talk about the steps of doing laundry.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Being able to identify how things are alike and different and to place objects and ideas into categories are important school skills that are used in almost every subject area.



Kindergarten Transition Resource Night

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of Preschoolers

DURATION 30–60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Packets filled with family resources, agenda, pens and sign-in sheet, rules, handbook, samples of school supplies, blank report cards

DESCRIPTION

Kindergarten Resource Night is a time to share helpful resources with families. These resources are designed to assist families in preparing both themselves and their child for kindergarten. Ideas for activities, helpful routines, community resources and much more can be discussed. Have interactive stations and tours that family members can visit: Meet the Bus Drivers, PTO, tour classrooms, bus tour, etc.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Make sure to plan time for questions and discussion.
- Have enough handouts for every family with important contact information so they can take the information home.



Listen

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children 5–7 years old

DURATION As long as needed

MATERIALS NEEDED Any small object, such as a ball or a photograph. Objects that can make noise, such as keys, water glasses, spoons and decks of cards.

DESCRIPTION

Hide a small object. Give your child directions to find it such as, “Take five steps straight ahead. Turn right. Keep the lamp to your left. Bend down and look to the right.” Next, have your child hide the object and give you directions to find it.

Have your child close his/her eyes. Use something to make a sound, such as rattling your keys, tapping a spoon against a glass or riffing a deck of cards. Ask your child to guess what’s making the sound.

Clap your hands to tap out a rhythm. Have your child listen and then clap that same rhythm back to you. Make the rhythms harder as he/she catches on.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Being able to listen and follow directions are valuable school skills.
- Using more vocabulary to describe observations during the activity helps increase literary skills.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

Take a walk with your child. Find a place to sit for a few minutes and both close your eyes for 30 seconds or so. Tell each other what you hear: a baby crying, an airplane, a bird singing, cars on the street, leaves rustling.

Take a walk with your child. This time, take turns telling each other what to do: cross the street, turn left, look down.



Lunch and Learn

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low-High

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 1 hour per session

MATERIALS NEEDED meeting space, tables, chairs, paper, pens, handouts

DESCRIPTION

Schools can provide monthly meetings for families to come during lunchtime to learn about how to help their children in specific subject areas or on specific skills. Educational professionals of specific subject areas can conduct the trainings.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Availability of teachers/ specialists, greatest areas of need (subject areas, skills, grade levels).
- Family members can bring their own lunch or the school can provide.



Now You See It, Now You Don't

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children 5–7 years old

DURATION As long as needed

MATERIALS NEEDED 2 ice cube trays, clock, small bowls, paper and pencil, water and other liquids, such as fruit juices

DESCRIPTION

Give your child a pencil and paper and tell her that she is going to be a scientist and take notes about what she observes in some experiments.

Together with your child, fill one ice cube tray to the top with water. Fill the other tray only half full. Put both trays in the freezer. Have your child record the time. Tell her to watch the clock and check every 30 minutes or so to see if the water in each tray has frozen (if not, wait until it has frozen). Ask your child to write down how long it took the water in each tray to freeze. Ask her which amount of water froze faster? Invite her to explain why she thinks this happened.

Have your child take one ice cube from each tray and put them in

continued on back

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Careful observation and note taking are valuable school skills.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

separate bowls to melt. Ask her to write down which cube melts faster—the larger one or the smaller one.

Put one ice cube in a window and another in the refrigerator (not the freezer) and have your child write down how long they each take to melt.

Freeze samples of liquids such as different kinds of fruit juices. Have your child compare their freezing times to that of water.



Weekly Newsletter

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children birth—2nd grade


DURATION Weekly

MATERIALS NEEDED 1 page newsletter template, email addresses and or phone numbers to text

DESCRIPTION

Provide a one page newsletter to families each week. Provide weekly theme, special activities, classroom needs, reminders, words of the week, etc.

Email or text a photo of the newsletter on Monday mornings.

THINGS TO CONSIDER 

Ask families their preferred way of communication.



Family Movie Night

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Access to family movie, any handouts

DESCRIPTION

Create lessons or activities to do after students watch an age-appropriate family movie with their families. After watching the movie the family can discuss various questions/topics. Activity can be done at individual homes or at school.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Provide discussion questions:

- favorite character
- favorite scene
- locations of the movie



Learning at Home

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—3rd grade

DURATION Daily

MATERIALS NEEDED Paper, index cards, pencil, markers, activities to check out

DESCRIPTION

After a discussion of their child's day, families can create ways to reinforce skills by means of making word cards to help with the learning process.

Example: make a site word memory game, matching game with numbers and concepts, etc.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



By the families following along with the child, they will know if the child is struggling in any way.



Monthly Newsletters

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Monthly

MATERIALS NEEDED Monthly topics to focus on to be printed or posted to social media for families to have access

DESCRIPTION

Develop a monthly newsletter. Articles and information could include:

- current skills being taught in all subject areas
- upcoming events
- resources
- donations/volunteers needed
- important reminders

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Consider families who have access to social media and then those who do not or don't feel comfortable with social media. Having both options ensures all families have access.



Read Together

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—3rd grade

DURATION 15—20 minutes daily

MATERIALS NEEDED Books for various age groups and abilities

DESCRIPTION

The family member and child will read daily. The family member will ask questions about the story, child will retell the story, discuss meaning of words, plot, characters, etc.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Have books available for the families through the school and local library.
- If possible, have multiple books of the week for the class to take home to read together.



School Readiness App, Text Messages

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of PreK children

DURATION Twice a month

MATERIALS NEEDED Format for text messages, permission form to send text messages

DESCRIPTION

Offer supports through an app or text messages for families to go out at least twice a month. Messages should reinforce and explain *Early Learning Standards* (ELS) objectives covered in classrooms. Use easy to understand format for families:

- Name of activity
- Goal of activity
- Materials needed
- Brief directions
- Importance of activity

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Schools need to have ELS per month to focus on and have brief easy explanations for the ELS objectives with easy at home activities to reinforce the ELS objectives.
- Try to avoid educational terms that families may not understand.
- Could use message system that school uses for reminders, announcements.



Developmental Checklist

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—Kindergarten

DURATION As needed

MATERIALS NEEDED Access to the learning standards for grade level

DESCRIPTION

The families will review the learning standards and follow along with the class on the standards they are working on. Families will have communication by newsletters, parent conferences, school website, Remind app, or Canvas app.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Teacher can send home the checklist to be covered with the weekly lesson plan.
- The checklist on Mississippi Department of Education website: mdek12.org/EC.



Take Home Bags

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of PreK children

DURATION Weekly

MATERIALS NEEDED Various materials to support the ELS for pre-k. Have brief directions which include why, outcome, and how to play together to reach the outcome.

DESCRIPTION

Schools should prepare take-home bags of hands on materials that families can check out during weekends/holidays. Each bag should include:

- **What:** Description of material and listing of materials/pieces included
- **Why:** Brief description of why activity is important
- **ELS:** State ELS the activity reinforces
- **Activity:** Give simple step by step directions for activity
- **Extension:** State one extension activity for ELS

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Schools or classrooms need a collection of materials that is categorized for easy selection to provide families.
- Cost can be shared with Title I funds, PTA/PTO, Community Organizations. Some vendors will offer discounts if you contact them.
- Think about consumables needing to be replenished or replaced.
- Consider a bag for materials so items can get home easy and returned to school.



Conversation Cards

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—1st grade DURATION Ongoing MATERIALS NEEDED Car Talk Cards (made by teacher)
COST	Low	

DESCRIPTION

Provide families with conversation cards for when they are traveling to spark learning conversations.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Include academic content, oral language, vocabulary, creative thinking.
- Teacher could include “Car Talk” ideas in weekly newsletter.



Dinner Theater

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Yearly event

MATERIALS NEEDED Dinner and decorations

DESCRIPTION

Students provide entertainment as family members enjoy a dinner. Musical performances, skits, and/or poetry reading can be included. Create a theme for the evening and enjoy a night of “Discovering the Arts”.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Students can work as waiters/waitresses and host/hostesses.
- Students can make centerpieces and decorations.
- Students can showcase special talents.
- Cafeteria can cater or ask a local restaurant to donate the food.



Handy Bracelets

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—2nd grade

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Colored paper or construction paper, scissors, markers or pens

DESCRIPTION

Send home important reminders or suggestions for activities on easy to make bracelets. For each child make a paper strip to display the information. Then tape the strip around each child's wrist.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Include:

- upcoming themes
- spelling words
- updates about the day
- supplies needed



30 Day Read Aloud Challenge

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low-Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—6th grade

DURATION Beginning of the year

MATERIALS NEEDED Books, stickers, challenge sheets, tip sheets for read aloud

DESCRIPTION

In this challenge, family members read aloud with a child for at least 15 minutes. Each family will keep track of the number of days that they read together. After the 30th day, turn in the chart to the teacher.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Have prizes for students at the completion of the challenge.
- Provide a system/chart to keep up with the books read.
- Provide some read-aloud tips for families prior to the start of the challenge.
- Provide suggestions for age appropriate books.
- Provide families with books through class lending libraries or book swaps.
- Advise families of places to get inexpensive books.



Home Publishing

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—5th grade

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Paper, markers, pencils, crayons, stapler and staples

DESCRIPTION

With 10 sheets of paper, have families work with children to create a book about themselves. Make a cover and staple all the sheets together. On each sheet write one thing about child and/or their family. Share and read the book together.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Ask the children to bring their books to school and share with the class.
- Provide printed template for families to fill in.



Take Home Jar

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—Kindergarten

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Plastic jar or small container and various interchangeable items

DESCRIPTION

Place items in the jar for sorting, counting, and or sequencing. On the plastic jar, attach a label that says, “Take Home Jar: Please read the note inside and follow the directions. Return the jar on the following school day.” Send the jar home with children. Encourage the class to do the same with the objects when the jar returns to class.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Site may need to provide replacement materials if items are lost.



Multilingual Family Support Team

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Develop a Multilingual Family Support Team. Members should strive to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities for multilingual families and their children. Conduct outreach services, provide interpretation at meetings, and help with technical needs. This can be on the school/program or district level.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

The Multilingual Family Support Team can be made up of individuals from various schools across the district.



College Forum

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low


TARGET AUDIENCE Families of high school students

DURATION Yearly

MATERIALS NEEDED Speakers on Financial Aid and Scholarships, College Counselor, community organizations that help with college preparation

DESCRIPTION

Conduct a family night to provide general information on applying to college, information on scholarships, financial aid, and academic planning.

THINGS TO CONSIDER 

Invite local community colleges, along with universities and colleges.



FAFSA Night—Free Application for Federal Student Aid

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of high school students

DURATION Yearly

MATERIALS NEEDED College Preparation Checklist

DESCRIPTION

Host a family night to help family members of seniors complete the FAFSA. The FAFSA is available in several formats, including online, PDF and paper versions. The best option is to complete the web-based version of the FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov, known as FAFSA on the Web. It includes step-by-step instructions for completing the online FAFSA as well as preapplication worksheets. You can obtain a FSA ID to electronically sign the form by visiting <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/fsaid>. If you have technical questions about using FAFSA on the Web, call 1-800-4-FED-AID.

THINGS TO CONSIDER 

Plan your meeting several months prior to application deadlines.

ACTIVITIES







Career Exploration Workshop

LEVEL	Difficult
COST	High

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 2—2.5 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED Career exploration inventory, folders, pens/pencils, note pads, food, sign-in sheets, and evaluations. In addition: laptop, LCD projector, flip chart/markers, extension cords, and speaker system/microphone/lapel microphone

DESCRIPTION

This career exploration workshop will provide free educational and employment related resources geared toward student interests and skill set. Participants will experience the following:

- **Know Yourself:** complete a 10-minute online inventory that offers personalized career suggestions
- **Research Your Options:** explore career fields, education requirements for specific industries/employers, work settings, and future outlook for career options

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Keep in mind this event is to be FREE for participants.
- May include food items for very young children, avoiding foods commonly causing allergic reactions.

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DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

- **Make Connections:** hear from employers in tourism/hospitality, manufacturing, health care, and finance, speak individually with representatives present

After the opening and 10-minute inventory, participants will break into groups based on the common areas of interest. This encourages participants to become familiar with each other to make new contacts, and share their aspirations and concerns. Ample time should be provided for participants to visit with representatives from local businesses and educational institutions.

Local employers (such as health care providers, businesses, banks, restaurants, and adult care providers) as well as other community partners may be encouraged to attend the event and assist attendees through the beginning steps of their an application and hiring process. Lunch, transportation, and on-site child care may be provided. Additional collaboration partners could include representatives from the WIN Job Center, colleges, and the local health department.

THINGS TO CONSIDER
(continued)

- Partners may be asked to provide funding for any costs incurred, including on-site child care, transportation, career exploration inventory (laptops with Internet access and paper copies), food, and other supplies as needed.



Family Night

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families of English learner (EL) students

DURATION 1–1.5 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED Agenda, handouts in families’ primary language, English as a second language resources

DESCRIPTION

Provide a family night led by a bilingual facilitator (for the language that most of your EL students speak). The facilitator could lead a tour of the school and introduce families to faculty and staff who will be working with their children. This will assist families in feeling more comfortable with the school and encourage participation in school activities, as well as help families understand the U.S. school system and school expectations.

A Family Welcome Sheet for families of EL students is provided on the MDE EL web page. This is a document that schools can use to input information related to their school.

<https://www.mdek12.org/EL>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- If the school does not have an interpreter, consideration should be made to partner with local universities, colleges or businesses to aid in this interpretation service.
- Providing child care may increase attendance.



Community Engagement Meet and Greet

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade, local and area business, organizations, and government agencies

DURATION 2 hours and can be offered on an annual basis

MATERIALS NEEDED Packets filled with resources for parents, agenda, and sign-in sheet

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the community engagement meet and greet is to provide families with the opportunity to learn about the different services offered in their community. Families will also have the opportunity to develop partnerships with various community resources. (Examples: Families First, local libraries, local museums, health department, etc.).

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Have enough materials for handouts that include contact information for families to take home.
- Make sure there is ample time for questions and opportunities for the families to meet with staff members individually if needed.



Cultural Diversity Professional Development

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Teachers and administrators

DURATION 1–2 hours, twice a year

MATERIALS NEEDED Speakers, sign-in sheets, agenda, and activity materials (handouts, pens, etc.)

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the cultural diversity workshops is for teachers and administrators to participate in interactive sessions to learn the importance of understanding the cultural barriers impacting learning and strategies. These community of learner sessions will provide teachers and administrators time to share ideas and other best practices to support the family goals and children’s learning in culturally and linguistically responsive ways.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Time for group activities and group sharing.



Family Survey

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION On an annual basis

MATERIALS NEEDED Family assessment document

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the family survey is to give family members the opportunity to provide their opinion and thoughts on various aspects of their child’s educational program. Results of these surveys can be used to assess program progress, make decisions, and change or revise program goals and actions. Surveys can be done in person or online.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Ensure that the assessment is designed in a way to allow families to provide thoughts on many different components of program operations.
- Assessments should be developed in a manner in which families are able to comprehend what is being asked of them.
- Translate assessments into multiple languages.
- Utilize free online survey tools such as [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).



Literacy Workshop

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade

DURATION 1 hour and can be offered on an annual/quarterly basis

MATERIALS NEEDED Packets filled with resources for families, agenda, sign-in sheet, and qualified speaker to demonstrate best practices

DESCRIPTION

Literacy workshops can help families learn more about the components of literacy. Families can also learn best practices for helping their child(ren) improve literacy while at home along with identifying other interactive strategies to support classroom learning.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Current trends and best practices to improve literacy skills for children.
- It is also important to understand the various educational levels of parents and any language barriers that may exist and/or pose potential problems for families working with children at home.



Phone Tree

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade DURATION Throughout the year MATERIALS NEEDED Families contact information
COST	Low	

DESCRIPTION

Families will be assigned to other families to call or text to remind them about school events and activities.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Families should keep all contact information confidential.



The Brain Architecture Game

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families, administrators, and teachers

DURATION 2 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED The Brain Architecture Game, computer, Internet access, follow-up questions, and screen

DESCRIPTION

This tabletop board game experience was designed to engage policymakers, community and business leaders, health and education service providers, and government officials in understanding the science of early brain development—what promotes it, what derails it, and what are the consequences for society. Originally developed in 2009 through a partnership of the Center on the Developing Child and the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts, the game has been play-tested by more than 12,000 people in teams at small workshops and large conferences.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



This will only give insight to brain development and how the life of a child can be affected by particular life events.



How to Advocate for Your Child

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 2 hours per session, ongoing, year round

MATERIALS NEEDED Family Resource handouts, checklists of various organizations and other advocacy groups.

DESCRIPTION

Local or statewide advocacy groups can provide training sessions to families on their rights and how to advocate for their children to receive appropriate services.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



While advocacy groups typically provide services to families of children with disabilities, it is important not to single out families to protect confidentiality.



How to Lead by Serving on Boards, Commissions, and Work Groups

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Moderate

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade and administrators

DURATION 2 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED Handouts, list of various organizations and other advocacy groups

DESCRIPTION

Invite local experts to speak to families about the importance of serving on boards, commissions, committees, etc. Sessions could include:

- Differences in boards, councils, and committees
- How to be involved
- Interpreting data
- Roberts Rules of Order

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Provide child care and food to increase attendance.



Family Representative

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Include family representatives for each class or grade on a program board or advisory group. Be sure to rotate members on and off each year so that all voices are represented and heard.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- This could be in addition to the board/group members.
- Members could be voted on by other families, volunteer to serve, or be appointed by teachers and administrators.



Family Committees

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade

DURATION Varies

MATERIALS NEEDED none

DESCRIPTION

Family Committees offer a way for all families to stay involved in the school or program even if family members don't have time to volunteer during the day. The extent of involvement ranges from giving feedback on the program to helping with fundraisers, marketing, and community involvement.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Create an Advisory Board or Committee. Terms can be long term or short term. Example: Graduation Committee, Back to School Night Committee, etc. Be sure to include representatives from administration and teachers.
- Meeting times should vary to meet needs of different work schedules.



Family Classroom Club

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION Quarterly throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Create a Classroom Club that meets regularly throughout the school year. Club meetings are opportunities for families to learn about learning standards, teaching strategies and assessments teacher use. The club provides a way for families to talk to the teacher and each other. They can find out ways to support their children’s learning, support the teacher and support each other.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Meetings can also be used to plan class events.
- Childcare provisions during the meetings.



Host Family

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE New students and their families to the school/program

DURATION Ongoing throughout the school year

MATERIALS NEEDED Contact information for new child and their family

DESCRIPTION

A Host Family will volunteer to reach out to a new child and their family at the school. When a new child enrolls, a host family will be contacted to reach out to the new family to welcome them and help guide them through the school year. Host families can reach out during:

- Homecoming week
- Holiday parties
- Parent/teacher conferences
- School events and activities

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- If possible, use a Host Family with a child the same age and gender as the new child. This could help provide the new child with a buddy at the new school.
- Ask the teacher to help seek out who the new student is connecting with to aid in the pairing.



Family Forums/Discussion Groups

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION As needed

MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Family Forums/Discussion Groups can be useful if schools/ programs are grappling with specific difficult issues. After a briefing by administration, families can help brainstorm ideas or solutions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- May include staff members as well.
- Have Administration at meeting to guide the meeting and answer questions. These are NOT meant to cause negative discussions.
- Specific protocol by staff and administration will help.
- Consider arranging interpreters for parents with limited English proficiency.



School/Program Leadership Team

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade

DURATION Throughout the year

MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Recruit family members to serve as members of a leadership team. Involve the members in continuous improvement planning and decision making. Ensure that members are involved in monitoring the implementation of school/program plans and assessment process. Additionally, ensure that family members from major groups are representing on the team. This could include:

- working family members
- stay-at-home family members
- family members from different cultural backgrounds

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Ensure that all families are kept informed of the leadership team's actions and know that they can provide input through the members.
- Hold quarterly information meetings for all family members. Allow families on the leadership team to lead/assist in leading the quarterly meetings.



School Ambassadors

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE All families DURATION Ongoing MATERIALS NEEDED None
COST	Low	

DESCRIPTION

Have family members and older students serve as Ambassadors for your school/program. Have Ambassadors available at all school events to assist families and answer any questions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Ambassadors could be points of contact for upcoming students and new students.

ACTIVITIES







Responding to Homeless Populations

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade who are homeless

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Resources for shelter, adult employment and assistance as needed

DESCRIPTION

Ask school personnel to reach out to and build relationships of trust with the homeless population. The goal would be to determine best community services for immediate response (shelter/food/clothing) and long-term life change opportunities. Encourage local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and local community colleges to develop a plan for hiring/training homeless population.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Cost would be determined by homeless population in specific districts.
- May involve community service organizations (Rotary Club, Junior Auxiliary, Excel by 5, Families First Resource Centers, Social Services Coalition).



Adopt-A-School

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade who have low incomes

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Volunteers to collect/organize/distribute material goods to meet needs of students

DESCRIPTION

The school adopter (churches or local community organizations or businesses would work well for this project) provides food bags on Friday for students who need food at home. When students need shoes, coats, or hygiene products, the adopter collects those items and gets them to the school. Student information must be kept confidential.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Currently implemented in Petal School District - contact for pros/cons/ assistance with planning and development.
- Responding to the needs during school breaks.
- Defining criteria for students to determine eligibility.



Library Playtime

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children birth—5 years old

DURATION 1 hour

MATERIALS NEEDED Age appropriate educational toys that are durable and easily cleaned

DESCRIPTION

Libraries are a great place to make new friends and learn new skills while having fun. Families and their children explore educational materials together in an interactive, free play environment.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, pediatricians agree that playtime is a very important part of a child's development. Hectic family schedules and other issues make finding time for play more challenging than ever. Children's play is serious business. As family members, we might assume that play is already a basic part of our children's lives. Most families are used to seeing the curious hands and questioning minds of their children as they explore and learn about the world around them. It seems that children are busy

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THINGS TO CONSIDER



- The program works best if staff interacts with families and children modeling appropriate language, encouraging family members to play/interact with their children, and guiding families to interact with other families.
- Check with your local library for various programs and times.

DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

all day long, whether we give them something to do or not. It is up to adults to define what healthy play should be, and to schedule that time so that it's safe, age-appropriate, and a big part of the lives of our children.

Visiting the library is a great way to connect to the community you live in. Libraries host book clubs, LEGO clubs, story times, puppet shows, writing camps, family movie nights, and information sessions on technology and community issues (among so many other things).



Community/Business Partnerships

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Local businesses and community organizations

DURATION Varies

MATERIALS NEEDED List of contacts and contact information, paper and envelopes for mailings, stamps

DESCRIPTION

Contact local businesses and/or community organizations to seek financial support for awarding students for growth in language acquisition. Seek assistance from local businesses and/or community organizations to request items such as gift certificates when EL students meet growth goals for English language acquisition and awards such as plaques or gift certificates when they become English proficient based upon requirements.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Reach out to as many businesses and organizations as possible, as some will not respond.
- Follow-up letters or emails with phone calls and/or personal visits.



Health and Wellness Fair

LEVEL	Difficult
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 2—3 hours in an evening or weekend

MATERIALS NEEDED District can provide tables and chairs for each entity that participates, which individual entities can provide their own materials to hand out to participants.

DESCRIPTION

District can sponsor a health and wellness fair that includes various agencies in the community that provide special services such as medical care, mental health, behavioral services, etc. Any family that has a specific area of concern for their child can participate and get information and referrals. This allows community partners an opportunity to collaborate with the school district around student wellness.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Include available agencies/ services that are specific to the community.
- Provide space available to accommodate a number of agencies, with space between to allow for some level of confidentiality in conversations.
- Though cost would be low, there would be a significant amount of time invested in planning.



Family Field Trips

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade
COST	Low	
		DURATION Ongoing
		MATERIALS NEEDED None

DESCRIPTION

Organize “Family Field Trips” on evenings or weekends. Family members, students, and teachers can explore community events, cultural events, museums, or other local areas of interest.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- See if you can get group discounts.
- Consider ways to extend the learning after the event.



School Spirit Night

LEVEL	Easy	TARGET AUDIENCE	Families with children PreK–12th grade
COST	Low-Moderate	DURATION	Ongoing
		MATERIALS NEEDED	Fliers promoting the event

DESCRIPTION

Partner with local restaurants to host school spirit nights for families with a portion of the proceeds going to the school/program. This is a great opportunity for families and staff to get to know each other informally.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Families pay for their own meals.
- Special menus may be available.
- Include a speaker prior to the meal or a short program.



Adopt-A-School

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK–12th grade

DURATION Ongoing

MATERIALS NEEDED Letters to solicit businesses to adopt school, postage

DESCRIPTION

Adopters/businesses work collaboratively with the schools/programs to develop a shared vision grounded in serving children and the school/program's community. Adopters/businesses can donate money, donate supplies, support local events, volunteer, etc.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Families within your school/program may own or work at businesses that may consider adopting your location.



No Cost Food Pantry

LEVEL	
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE All families in need

DURATION Program's discretion

MATERIALS NEEDED Food scale, fresh produce, other donated groceries, grocery bags or boxes

DESCRIPTION

Local farmers and community members donate fresh produce and other groceries for families. Each family can have a limited amount of produce, proteins, and canned goods.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Provide options for family members with food allergies or special health needs such as gluten-free items or sugar-free items.



Volunteer and Partnership Breakfast

LEVEL	Easy
COST	Medium

TARGET AUDIENCE Family volunteers, community members, business owners

DURATION 1 hour at the beginning of each school year

MATERIALS NEEDED Tables and chairs, breakfast foods and drinks, plates and utensils

DESCRIPTION

Invite family and community members who are interested in volunteering at the school. Share volunteer opportunities with them, and ask what they can offer to your school/program. (Examples: tutoring, clean-up, sponsoring parties/events, etc.) Previous volunteers can speak about their volunteer experience and school benefits.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Ask family members and community members if they would sponsor the breakfast to help cover costs. Cafeterias may be able to provide some of the food.



Industry Partnership

LEVEL		TARGET AUDIENCE All ages
COST	Low	DURATION Ongoing
		MATERIALS NEEDED Agendas, list of goals and ideas for partnership bags or boxes

DESCRIPTION

A school-industry partnership is when a school and a local business join together to share resources. This can take the form of monetary donations, contributing time from local professionals, donating equipment, offering internships, etc. There are many different ways to make this relationship work, depending on what the school needs and what the local business has to offer.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



Businesses who support local schools are often seen in a positive light by their community and sometimes see business increase.



Family Health Education

LEVEL	Intermediate
COST	Low

TARGET AUDIENCE Families with children PreK—12th grade

DURATION 45 minutes to an hour

MATERIALS NEEDED Appropriate guest speakers from your community to discuss topics of expertise (Pediatrician, Health Department Representative, Nutritionist, Dentist, Insurance Agent etc.)

DESCRIPTION

Health education services provide information about matters such as family planning, nutrition, substance abuse, screening services, prenatal care and information on other health related topics. Share health education information with families by providing guest speakers with knowledge about the topics and helpful resources that families may be interested in or need.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



- Ensure that health education provided takes into consideration participant needs and how the information provided can improve the families' well-being.
- Encourage family participation by providing food and child care.
- Include infant care and best practices along with health and safety training.