



Expanded Learning Opportunities: **Parent/Family Engagement**

EC487

**LEADER
GUIDE**

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Lesson Goal

Children and youth in out-of-school settings reach their full potential as a result of positive youth/adult interactions, purposeful learning experiences, and safe environments.

Nebraska School-Age and Youth Development Core Competencies

Core Knowledge Area: Relationships

- **1.12** Maintains an open and cooperative relationship with each family and is responsive to the family's concerns and interests.
- **2.13** Values families as active decision makers and builds on families' strengths.

Core Knowledge Area: Growth and Development

- **1.13** Creates positive relationships with the families of youth.
- **2.13** Engages families as partners in the care and education of youth.

Learner Objectives

By completing this lesson, you will:

- recognize the benefits and barriers of parent/family engagement.

- identify engagement strategies.
- develop and implement an action plan for parent/family engagement.

>> **Before the Meeting**

Read the leader and participant guides and review the leader resources. Make copies of the Parent/Family Engagement Action Plan activity sheet (one per participant). Create signs for Activity 3a.

>> **Additional Supplies**

Sticky notes, paper, and writing utensils for group activities.

>> **Introduction**

Successful and well-designed out-of-school programs have a strong foundation of parental support and family engagement. Families are key partners in education and contribute to the success of children's learning experiences. Implementing parent/family engagement strategies into out-of-school programs will benefit the program, youth workers, parents, and most important, the youth participants.

>> **Estimated Lesson Time**

60-75 minutes



>> At the Meeting

1. Introduce yourself and the lesson topic using the introduction on Page 1.
 - a. Ask participants, “What is the first thing that comes to mind when we say ‘parent engagement’?” Have participants write it down and share it with the person sitting next to them. Share answers with the group. (Often, we think of parent engagement as volunteering at the out-of-school program site, chaperoning a field trip, or providing an activity or refreshments during a special event. While volunteering is very important, there are a number of other ways that engagement can occur). Ask participants to raise their hands if their out-of-school program has a well-planned action plan or program for parent and family engagement. Tell participants: “Today, we’re going to explore engagement strategies and develop an engagement plan that will work for you, your parents and families, and your out-of-school program.”
2. Benefits and Barriers to Parent/Family Engagement
 - a. Break participants into small groups to discuss the benefits of parent/family engagement in out-of-school programs. Discuss: What are the benefits for youth? What are the benefits for parents? Have groups share some of the benefits with the larger group (support children’s learning, improved program outcomes, greater involvement in school events, social and academic growth, increase in family assistance with children’s homework, improved relationships between parents and children, expanded learning opportunities for youth involved with the program).
 - b. Have small groups discuss the barriers to parent/family engagement in out-of-school programs and share with the larger group (time, work commitments, transportation, caring for other adults or children, parents feel unwelcome, parents unfamiliar with other parents, lack of funds for engagement programs, cultural or language barriers, etc.). Additional discussion questions: Who is responsible for parent/family engagement? (Often, the responsibility of engagement is placed solely on the parents. Engagement is a shared responsibility among parents/families, the out-of-school program/staff, schools, etc.) Is there a perception by youth workers that parents are uninterested in engagement? What limits do out-of-school youth workers face in successfully engaging parents/families?
3. Strategies for Engagement
 - a. Post signs on a meeting room wall that list the following “Strategies for Engagement” (one topic per sign): Welcoming Environment, Communication, Family Support, Volunteer Opportunities, Learning Opportunities at Home, Decision-Making Roles/Advocacy, Professional Development, Parent Recognition. Pass out the *Expanded Learning Opportunities: Parent/Family Engagement Participant Guide*.
 - b. Introduce “Strategies for Engagement” and share general information about each. Have participants work in small groups and brainstorm ways to increase parent/family engagement in out-of-school programs, listing one idea per sticky note. After ideas are generated, each group will stick the ideas on the wall under the appropriate category/sign. Have each group share some of their best ideas. Share additional ideas posted with each category/sign.
 - c. Roving Reporter Activity. Participants will play the role of news reporter and interview parents about parent/family engagement. Through the interviews, reporters will identify additional engagement strategies. Break participants into small groups. Each group will formulate questions to ask during their interviews. They may interview parents in the room/building/area or call parents using cell phones. Reporters can work individually or in teams, and will have 10-12 minutes to complete their interviews.

Once interviews are finished, small groups will discuss the information they collected and prepare/produce a “live” news report or a “breaking news” story/article about parent/family engagement. Allow time for the groups to report and to share any additional results/comments they found interesting. Discussion questions could include: What information surprised you? What similarities did you notice? What differences did you observe? How can this information help you engage parents/families?
4. Parent/Family Engagement Action Plan
 - a. Pass out the Parent/Family Engagement Action Plan activity sheet to participants. Using ideas

generated from Activity 3b and 3c, they will create an action plan that will increase parent/family engagement in their out-of-school program. After completing the activity sheet, ask participants to share one thing they incorporated into their action plan and why.

- b. Using the conclusion in the participant guide, ask for additional questions or comments and wrap up the lesson by thanking everyone for their participation.

Resources

Build the Out-of-School Time Network. *Engaging Families in Out-of-School Time Programs Toolkit: Tools to Strengthen After School and Youth Programs by Increasing Family Involvement*. Boston, MA.: BOSTnet.

Epstein, J. (2001). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships. Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Harris, E., & Wimer, C. (2004). *Engaging with Families in Out-of-School Time Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

Harvard Family Research Project. Harvard Graduate School of Education (2005). *Research Findings on Family Engagement in Out-of-School Time Programs*. Cambridge, MA.

Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. C. (2004). *Parental School Involvement and Children's Academic Achievement: Pragmatics and Issues*. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13:161-164.

Intercultural Center for Research in Education & National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2005). *Pathways to Success for Youth: What Works in Afterschool: A Report of the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study*. Boston, MA: United Way of Massachusetts Bay.

Kakli, Z., Kreider, H., Little, P., Buck, T., & Coffey, M. (2006). *Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After-School*. Harvard Family Research Project and Build the Out-of-School Time Network (BOSTnet).

Kreider, H., & Westmoreland, H. (2011). *Promising Practices for Family Engagement in Out-of-School Time*. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Virginia Department of Education. (2010). *Tips and Strategies for Increasing Parent and Family Involvement in Virginia Schools*. Center for Family Involvement.

Parent/Family Engagement Action Plan

List parent/family engagement activities or actions you will implement.	List resources needed (time, financial support, lesson plans, partners, etc).	What is the timeline for implementation?	Outcomes: How did it go? Any feedback?
Welcoming Environment			
Communication			
Family Support			
Volunteer Opportunities			

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Learning Opportunities at Home			
Decision-Making Roles / Advocacy			
Professional Development			
Parent Recognition			