How can I get them involved?

Strategies and ideas for engaging families to support their children’s language and literacy development

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Today we will...

• Discuss why families are important to supporting children’s language and literacy skill development.

• Describe strategies we use in our project to plan for engaging families in literacy events.

• Share how one program planned and implemented a fun “family-centered” field trip activity.

• Share with each other ideas and strategies that have worked in our respective programs

Why Involve Families?

• This is not about THEM. This is about ALL of us — teachers, families, community members, and children.

• Literacy skills are the foundations for school success.

• Literacy development begins in the home.

• Parents and caregivers are their children’s first teachers of literacy.

Why Involve Families?

“Reading with children, opportunity for verbal interactions, value placed on literacy, and experiences with print are some key ways in which the home environment influences children’s early literacy development.”

Gonzalez and Uhing (2008)
Families are the primary caregivers and educators of young children. Families should be aware of programmatic goals, experiences that should be provided for children and expectations for their performance by the end of the preschool years.

Program staff members and families should work collaboratively to ensure that children are provided optimal learning experiences.

From the Illinois Early Learning Standards

What are the goals we want to achieve?

- Focus on and relate to literacy
- Child focused
- Teach parents new skills and the purpose of the activity

What are the areas we need to include?

- passport

Sign-in Table
Reading Area

• Parent and child read together

Writing Area

• Parent cue cards
• Activity is related to literacy

Make and Take Activity

• Snack
• Follow recipe card

Craft

• Teach parent new skills
**Games**
- File Folder games
- Flannel stories
- Puzzles

**Evaluation**
- Evaluation form
- Take home literacy sheet
- Take home activity

**Incentive Program**
- Incentive awards given for each event

**YOUR TURN! Plan a Family Event**
- Break into small groups
- Select a theme for your event
- Complete the planning form
  - Select a member of your group to write down your ideas on the sheet
- Share ideas with the large group
  - Select a member of your group to report back to the large group
How one program did it...

- Brainstormed what children needed to learn.
- Used planning grid to determine that all of the bases were covered.
- Developed forms and activities to be used.

Brainstorming

- Check out the location prior to taking the children there.
- Staff gathered to brainstorm what needs to be accomplished on the trip.
  - Geographic knowledge
  - Things you can see at the zoo
  - Zoo etiquette
  - Concepts about animals
  - Parent involvement

Using the Planning Sheet

- Plug in various activities to do while at the zoo.
  - Classroom preparation.
  - With parents around the zoo.
  - With parents using cameras.
  - When we returned.

- Plug in where the various goals would occur.

Preparing Materials for the Trip

- Parent letter explain the activities.
- Zoo to do list.
- Zoo hunt.
- Zoo etiquette.
- Disposable cameras.
This small shrub is the bottlebrush buckeye (Aesculus parviflora), native to southeastern US. It's a great plant for shady sites, but it won't always stay small. A plant in North Carolina is 40 feet wide! It grows well in zones 5-9 and always flowers in early-mid summer. It can also be grown in full sun.
Major Messages

- Planning is important.
  - We need to be...
  - Purposeful and intentional with our activities.
  - Have regular interactions
  - Share information
  - Provide appropriate materials
  - Create meaningful assignments
  - Use community resources
  - Explicit with the goals we are trying to achieve.
    - Literacy

- Building on fun activities
- Motivating using incentives

Following up helps
Activities for home
Gathering feedback

Sometimes, “less is more”
Life happens for all, especially the families we serve so if families only come once to an activity be thankful and be sure to take advantage of their presence.

Others