

# GROWING TOGETHER: UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

ENGAGING FAMILIES TO SUPPORT GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

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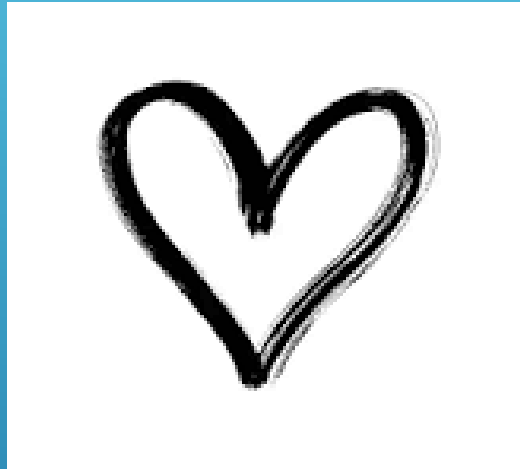




# WHAT IS YOUR QUESTION???

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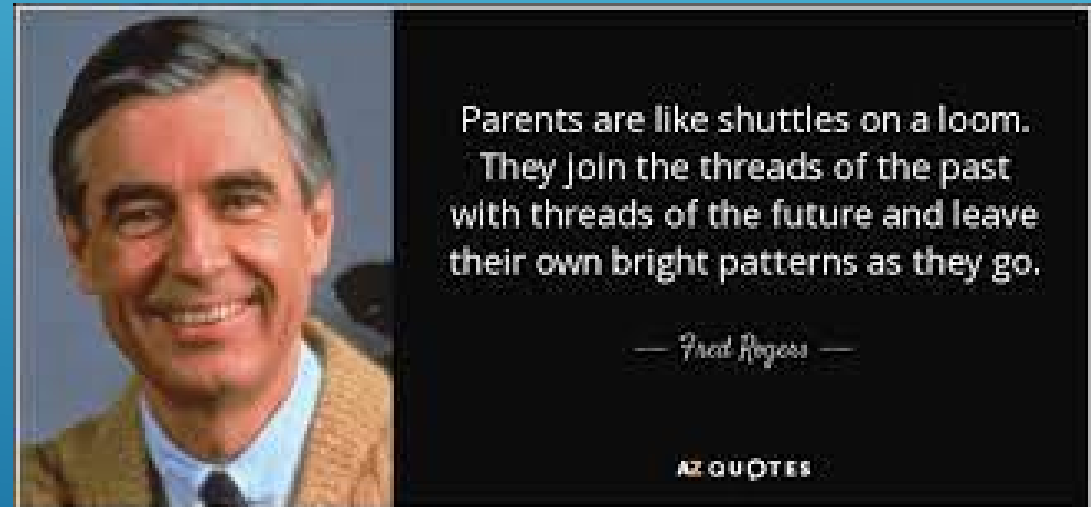


**OUR APPROACH: THINK-FEEL-DO**



# STRENGTHENING FAMILIES/IMPROVING CHILD OUTCOMES

- ▶ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt\\_EyDney-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt_EyDney-4)



# FAMILIES INCLUDE MULTI-GENERATIONS OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS



# ACTIVITY

1. What are you currently doing to engage families?

2. How do you see your role? (e.g., are you, “a partner” or “co-partners”?)

3. In what ways would you like to change how you engage families?

- What would be the benefits?





**WHAT BARRIERS  
HAVE YOU  
ENCOUNTERED  
WHEN ENGAGING  
WITH FAMILIES?**

Attitudes and Values

Expectations for behaviors

Styles of adult-child interaction

Failure to recognize the parent as a legitimate source of information and knowledge

Failure to listen

Turf issues

Time and Energy

# COMMON COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

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# COMMON COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

## One-way communication designed to:

- instruct parents about child development
- inform parents how the curriculum teaches their children
- tell parents about activities, policies and procedures

## Language that is:

- ambiguous, not descriptively specific
- full of jargon
- judgmental

# A FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH

- ▶ Acknowledges the importance of parents as “true” partners in child development and early education
- ▶ Respects families as decision-makers
- ▶ Values and supports parent interaction and participation as a means of strengthening the relationship between parent and child
- ▶ Recognizes that trusting relationships with parents is the basis from which to construct educational experiences with children

- ▶ Are most interactions with parents problem-focused?
- ▶ How easy is it for a parent to find out what is going on in your practice?
- ▶ Are parents a regular source of information? Is parental input valuable and does it ever influence change in what we do?
- ▶ Do parents typically come to you to discuss positive activities?
- ▶ Are parents informed when their children are doing exciting and interesting things in the classroom? When children are doing well?

## HOW FAMILY CENTERED ARE YOUR PRACTICES?

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- ▶ **Communicate Openly and Clearly**
- ▶ **Encourage Parent-Child Interaction**
- ▶ **Affirm Parent Competencies**
- ▶ **Make Mutual/Joint Decisions**
- ▶ **Focus Parent's Attention on Child's Strengths**
- ▶ **Share Developmental Information and Resources**
- ▶ **Use Observations and Data**
- ▶ **Model and/or Suggest**

## **ENGAGING FAMILIES STRATEGIES**

# VALUING PARENTS AS PARTNERS



- ▶ What do we want for our children?
- ▶ What do we know about them that will help us all to better understand them?
- ▶ How can parents and professionals support each other's roles in the child's development?

- ▶ All new parents want perfection for their children.
- ▶ All of parenting is a struggle with the reality of giving up control.
- ▶ All parents need support and encouragement for their child-rearing practices.

**UNDERSTAND THAT FAMILIES DEVELOP  
TOO!**

# RECOGNIZE PARENTS' EXPERTISE



- ▶ Parents are a powerful and important source of knowledge about children.
- ▶ The people with the problems are also the people with the solutions.

**EXPECT DIFFERENCES AND, AT TIMES,  
CONFLICTS IN VALUES, ATTITUDES, GOALS,  
AND PARENTING STYLES, AND BE SENSITIVE  
TO THESE DIFFERENCES.**



Two-way communication includes creating avenues for families to share their culture and to participate fully in the discussion of what is in their child's best interest.



# TO BE CHILD CENTERED IS TO BE FAMILY CENTERED – WE MUST START WITH THE BELIEF THAT EVERY FAMILY IS SEEN AT PROMISE.

- ▶ **Agency** -- Families want to participate in decisions, not be victims of things outside their control. All human beings are goal directed and active learners who seek information.
- ▶ **Relationships** – All families have a need to connect to others – they, like all of us, need to belong, feel respected, be listened to, and be affirmed. All of us develop through responsive and supportive relationships.
- ▶ **Competence** – Families need to be seen as competent – they need to feel capable and successful.

# WHAT IS IT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FAMILIES ALREADY POSSESS ABOUT LEARNING? WHAT DO THEY DO TO ENCOURAGE LEARNING AND HOW DO THEY DO IT?

- Our attempts to engage parents should focus on inquiry related to what we can learn from them as they share their experiences, knowledge, and skills. These funds of knowledge are located within daily activities and experiences, the meaning of which we (as co-partners) can construct through talking about these.

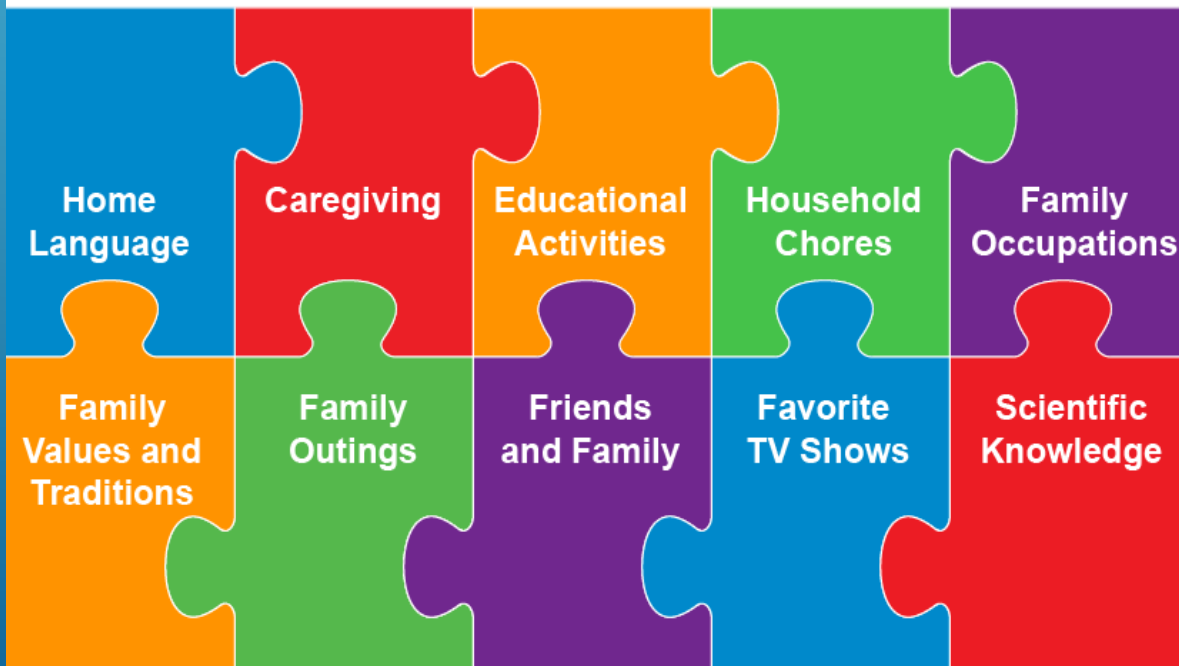
## Funds of Knowledge as a Resource

*Funds of knowledge are those historically developed and accumulated strategies or bodies of knowledge that are essential to the function and well-being of a household.*

- Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez

SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT FAMILIES ALREADY KNOW VALIDATES THEIR INTELLIGENCE AND WORTH, AND INVITES NATURAL, INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE INTO THEIR PRESET FOR LEARNING.

### Funds of Knowledge



- Our task is to create a space where families, teachers, and care providers can learn together and from each other. To do that, we must reach out regularly and frequently – and we must always understand that working with families is a necessary and crucial part of what we do.

**YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD MUCH  
BETTER THAN I WILL EVER KNOW  
THEM. WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME THAT  
WILL HELP ME TO BE A BETTER  
TEACHER (YOUR ROLE) FOR THEM?**

# CELEBRATE WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD

[https://www.ted.com/talks/dewitt\\_jones\\_celebrate\\_what\\_s\\_right\\_with\\_the\\_world?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/dewitt_jones_celebrate_what_s_right_with_the_world?language=en)



# CALL TO ACTION

- ▶ We want you to feel connected, empowered, valued, respected, challenged and supported.
- ▶ Today I learned...
- ▶ Today I felt....
- ▶ This learning matters because...

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