

Shakyra Lipscomb  
ECE 210  
Advocacy Paper  
5/25/21

## Family Engagement

I would like to bring light and attention to family engagement in the early childhood settings. I am here to advocate on the behalf of all children who will benefit from family engagement in their everyday school life. Parent or family engagement in schools is defined as parents and educators working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children. Family engagement in schools contributes to positive student outcomes, including improved child and student achievement, decreased disciplinary issues, improved parent-teacher and teacher-student relationships, and improved school environment. Strong family engagement is central in promoting children's healthy development and wellness like social-emotional and behavioral development, preparing children for school, supporting academic achievement in elementary school and beyond. Children are directly affected by this issue because it can determine a child's performance in school. Many parents drop their kids off in the morning while the teachers take over, and then pick them up at the end of the day without giving their learning much more thought. With the help of parents being involved in schools we can extend teaching outside the classroom and create a more positive experience for children which will help children perform better when they are in school.

Parent involvement leads to positive benefits for students, parents, and schools, including improved academic performance and improved parent-teacher relationships. Students whose parents were involved in school during their elementary years experienced lower rates of high school dropout (Impact of Family Engagement, 2021). In low income communities there is less

family engagement because of parents having issues such as lack of time, busy schedules, language barriers, miscommunication in attitudes or simply parents just don't want to interfere with the teacher doing their job. The most common barrier to engagement is lack of time, with 54% of parents and guardians reporting that their busy schedule is a medium to very large problem for becoming involved with their child's school (Barriers to Family Engagement). This issue must be addressed now because it is never too late to make a change that would benefit a child. A comprehensive review of the literature on family engagement in early childhood found that all families from diverse socioeconomic, educational and racial/ethnic backgrounds were interested in their child's educational success and could effectively support their child's learning at home and school when provided with the information and guidance that they needed.

The goal of advocating for all families to be engaged in their child's school life is so that children, teachers and parents can all benefit from this amazing relationship. We need teachers and educators to help parents understand the important role they play not only in the child's home life but school life as well. The primary motivation for parents to become involved appears to be a belief that their actions will improve their children's learning and well-being. To increase parent engagement in school health, schools must make a positive connection with parents. It is essential for school staff, parents, and community partners to recognize the advantages of working together to guide children's health and learning. This can be accomplished by having a shared school vision for engaging parents in their children's education and communicating that vision to everyone in the school community. The school's vision for parent engagement can set the tone for a positive relationship with parents and the expectations parents have for being involved in school health and academic activities. Schools should also provide a variety of activities and frequent opportunities to fully engage parents. Schools can sustain parent

engagement by addressing the common challenges to getting and keeping parents engaged. I need for teachers, educators, and school staff to come on this journey with me to show parents how important family engagement is. With the help of us educators and the wonderful parents we can build up the generations to come and provide the support they need to succeed in their lifetime.

The article “Deepening Families’ Understanding of Children’s Learning in Centers” by Dismuke et al. (2017) was mainly about showing and explaining to parents how children learn through play. Parents had many questions as to how their child was learning if they were playing most of the time. A parent expressed their curiosity through a question stating “When I drop my child off, I see some of her friends building block towers in one area of the classroom and playing grocery store in another. What’s the purpose of having different centers? And how do children learn if they play so much?” (Dismuke et al, 2017) . This is where family engagement plays a part and where teachers can show parents how the centers cater to their child’s learning and development. The school allowed the parents to come and observe to see how their kids act and experience learning through playing at learning centers. This learning experience came about for parents after they had questions about how playing helps their child learn. After watching how the kids play and comparing it to the handouts given by the teachers with specific skills the children are developing, this has opened their eyes about how important playing is for children. Since learning and observing, parents have been more involved in their child’s play and encouraging them to explore more through play. This article was a great example of how parents' questions and concerns can be the start of them being involved in their child’s school life.

Although the article “Improving Family Engagement in Early Childhood Education Through Technology” by Daugherty et al, (2014) is short, it is very interesting. In this article it

talks about the positive effects that family engagement has on children and how technology can help create new opportunities to improve family engagement. The article states “Parents and other family members play an important role as "teachers" during the time children spend outside the classroom”(Daugherty et al, 2014). I find this quote to be amazing because it is true. Parents are a child’s first teacher in life and it is important that the parents engage with teachers to find the best way to accommodate a child so they can learn best. In the article it also talks about some of the reasons why parents are not as involved or might not feel confident enough to get involved in their child education because of the lack of knowledge they think they have. This is where my teachers, educators and school staff have to step in and help me get the parents involved. Last but not least the article gives great recommendations for providers to communicate with the parents. It explains the different tools that will help assist in this. It is much easier for teachers and parents to communicate using many forms of platforms so there should be no excuses as to why a parent and teacher cannot communicate. This article sets the tone showing the many ways we can make family engagement possible for parents, children and teachers.

In order to bring awareness to this topic I will set out to do multiple small advocacy projects to shine light on why family engagement is important for all. Even though I am sure many schools send home a newsletter I will start off by sending the newsletters home weekly to the parents. Within these letters I will introduce the topic of family engagement to better inform parents about what I am advocating for. I will continue bringing awareness by having myself and teachers make phone calls to parents. Thus, if there are any questions regarding the topic it can be further explained. Along with my other small actions I will host community meetings inside schools every other week for 60 minutes. This will allow parents to attend as often as they can but also to connect with teachers about their children. I will extend the meeting to public areas

such as parks and this would be my final step so parents and others in the community are able to come and understand the importance of family engagement. It is important to involve not only parents but community members as well because it does take a village to raise a child. I would love to have everyone on board with helping me show the importance of involving family in school life.

To carry out my large advocacy action plan I want to reach my audience, which are stakeholders. These stakeholders are mainly parents but teachers are just as important because they are the ones that will help me get the message out. For my first step towards my large advocacy action I want to gather stakeholders and develop a social media campaign such as a support page on Facebook. The social media campaign will help bring a lot of awareness and light to the issue of family engagement. By doing the campaign on social media it will not cost any money. The approach that I am deciding to take with large advocating action will require teachers and educators to play a huge role by setting up the foundation for family engagement. It will be most effective to have stakeholders because these are the people that will help me get the coverage I need to get out what I am advocating for. I think social media campaigns will really help as well because of the times we are in. These campaigns will be able to reach more people and gain coverage as well as help me connect with people advocating for the same topic as me. This will refer back to the article by Daugherty et al. about how to engage parents due to different technologies. This is why I feel taking the approach on social media would be most beneficial to my campaign.

I decided to choose this topic because as an educator it is important to me that families be engaged and involved in their child's development. Having the family involved not only helps students succeed more but it gives me a better understanding and connects to both parents and

students. Addressing this issue is important to me because I want the children to feel supported inside and outside of school. By having family engagement in schools this will help teachers to provide consistency between home life and school life. Overall it is important to me because when I was growing up families including mine were very engaged in school life and I feel it helped many children succeed including me. Family engagement helps children feel connected to their caregivers, families and communities. Parents who are connected in a child's school life help the children feel safe, secure, supported and ready to learn. Family engagement also helps parents and other caregivers feel connected to the teachers, their children and communities. I feel as though family engagement has not been as great as it can be, especially in low income areas. I understand that we face many daily obstacles that may hold up a parent's time, but I would like to change the future. I am here to advocate for the children and I would like parents and educators to join me and help me help the children succeed.

## References

10, P. by R. S. J., Spreeuwenberg, P. by R., Simon, P. R., & Price, P. K. (2021, March 3). *Why Parent Involvement is So Important in Early Childhood Education. HiMama Blog - Resources for Daycare Centers.*

*Barriers to Parent Involvement: Project Appleseed.* Project Appleseed. (2020).

Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016). *Identifying Barriers: Creating Solutions to Improve Family Engagement.*

Daugherty, L., Dossani, R., Johnson, E.-E., & Wright, C. (2014, November 17). *Improving Family Engagement in Early Childhood Education Through Technology.* RAND Corporation.

DISMUKE, F. A. Y. E., PARKS, N. I. C. H. O. L. E., & JUDY, J. U. D. Y. (2017, April). *Deepening Families' Understanding of Children's Learning in Centers.* NAEYC.

*Impact of Family Engagement.* Impact of Family Engagement | Youth.gov. (n.d.).

*PARENT ENGAGEMENT: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health.* (2013, January).