

Different Kinds of Families in Early Childhood Programs  
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### **Abstract**

In this paper, it will discuss the different kinds of families in early childhood programs. We will go over the small and large issues of advocacy that impact on children and their families. When you think of the word “family,” you think of love, support system, and comfort for someone. Family is someone who is there for you in good times and bad. They are someone who doesn’t judge but expresses their feelings towards your situations that occur. But the real question is “what happens when you take the children out the spotlight and focus on children with their families?” You get a family centered approach in education. It’s a working partnership with families to make a better understanding of a child’s unique circumstances. It allows us educators to get a better picture of what we are working with and what we need to fix. Now in early childhood programs diversity is a big thing. We need to make families feel comfortable and safe when bringing their child to these programs. Some topics we need to focus on when it comes to families are traditional families, single parents, cultural families, multi-generational families, mixed families, and even the same-sex parent families. All these topics should be treated with respect and not favoritism. We should like someone for who they are and not where they come from. We as educators have the right to help these children and make them feel there is hope for them regardless of their background.

### **The Impact of Different Kinds of Families in Early Childhood Programs**

Families have a strong impact on children's learning and socialization skills. Their learning and socialization skills are mostly influenced by their own families they are surrounded by. Families are a child's primary social group. Most children's development happens through physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. As children move forward in their learning, it is important that we as educators provide a safe, supportive and comfortable learning environment. According to *The Role of Family in Childhood Development*, Humans rely heavily on learning for child development. When we grow up, we follow the footsteps of our loved ones because we don't know how to behave. Children watch their families and behave the way they see things. In fact, children who grow up that have the same sex parents grow up to be treated different then to having different sex parents. But that should change the fact on how they should be treated in public. The most important thing about families is we learn different things about each other and where we are from. We bring culture in classrooms and make it come to reality. Early childhood classrooms bring out many diversities that are addressed in either books, pictures, family trees, artwork and events and activities. In early childhood that's why we educators allow children to focus on different units of studies. The unit of studies allow children to be open minded of who they are and how their families brought them up.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem some children may face in early childhood programs have to do with families. In a child's preschool years, family involvement is a big part of a child's learning development. We as teachers allow all family members, guardians and love ones to be a part of their child's

journey in school. Some families may feel ashamed or scared when coming to the classroom. Families don't want to be judged or talked by with others. But as educators we make sure everyone is comfortable with their surroundings when bringing their child and even entering the classroom. Coming out doesn't necessarily mean turning your sexual life the other way around, it can also mean showing your culture and who you are and why we are brought up the way we are. Children who families fall under the traditional families, single parents, cultural families, multi-generational families, mixed families, and even the same-sex parent families all have one thing in common, they are different but unique in their own way. That's why we make events up, parent week, celebrations to gather everyone and learn new things.

In week 10 we discussed work families. According to Marianna Souto Manning, we read an article on "*Family Involvement: Challenges to consider and strengthen to build on*" discussed topics of having a clear mind, building relationships and bonds, volunteering time, and making a place for meaningful peer interactions with one another. Calling family members, helping them feel at ease, and setting a clear and mutually agreed on expectations (Epstein 2001) are the important first steps towards family involvement. Many families may not be able to come to the classroom for involvement due to their work or busy schedules. Therefore, us teachers do follow ups. We use the follow ups with families to jointly plan for the family's contributions. Having conversation with family members allows us teachers to work out details for the future. For example, they may celebrate happening and some families aren't able to come due to work. Therefore, we as teachers step in and keep the child company for the celebration. No child shall feel left out because of their families.

Another example is family engagement. It is more successful when we leave blank spaces on a paper to allow families to be open minded and put their interests down. Providing a blank space for invitation allows families to give their suggestions in learning something new. When families come to a classroom, make sure that they are welcomed and be sure to let them know how their contributions will support each child's education and learning development. When families are involved in activities, they are most likely to further that activity in coming back for more engagement time in the classroom. This allows families to feel more comfortable, competent and involved (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti 2005).

### **Research**

Research suggests that the impact on families in early childhood programs develops a child's learning ability. Children learn from others by storytelling, activities plan, and lessons they follow. These researchers show us that without different kinds of families, early childhood programs won't be diverse.

### **Article #1**

In the article "*Family Involvement: Challenges to consider, and strengthen to build on*", Marianna Souto Manning talks about how to consider and respect families cultures backgrounds. On page 4, often teachers and families have different cultural expectations about children's learning development and schooling. Some teachers feel that they are getting viewed, criticized, or questioned on what we teach and how we teach it. That's why teachers need to focus and ask families questions about themselves. For example, when I taught preschool, every new year we allow families to work on a worksheet with their children. On the worksheet it allows them to fill

in the blanks of each question that talks about their culture, language, what foods they can or can't have, holidays, and who lives with them. In other words, get to know your families well. Teachers are key players when it comes to understanding how children function as members of different groups and their translation between home and school.

Finding creative ways to address some challenges of family involvement is essential throughout the year. Teachers ask families questions about the child to get a better understanding of who they are teaching. Teachers learn a child's favorite food to their cons and pros when it comes to interacting with other friends. All teachers want is progress in a child's learning development and without families it's hopeless. That's why there are such things as "parent teacher conferences."

### **Article #2**

In the article titled "Immigrant and Diverse Families", Marianna Souto Manning talks about identifying the strengths children bring into the classroom. She describes her own teaching experiences over the three years she taught preschool. Marianna worked with children who were taught to learn literacy and learning in bilingual classrooms. Marianna learned and listened closely to the children that she can understand when it came to learning literacy and the funds of knowledge they bring to school. Children tend to struggle in academic strengths because certain families don't read to their own children or let children learn in the United States schools. She believed their background had a view she wasn't able to see through. Therefore, she started to observe each child and take notes and document it all. When change happens in a classroom, it's

because children need it. Change helps improve a child's life when it comes to learning.

In the beginning of the paper, I talked about the different types of families. One type of family was multicultural. In education multicultural is an action towards culturally responsive teaching for immigrants and diverse children. Some culturally responsive strategies for teachers are to activate students' prior knowledge, make learning contextual, encourage students, reconsider classroom setup, and also build relationships with one another. Sometimes we make a classroom that is best for our children but end up changing it when we get to see and know each child and their families.

### **Article #3**

The article titled, "*Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Supporting Bilingualism in Early Childhood classrooms*", Melissa Cavaluzzi talks about the lack of communication between families and their children's educators and caregivers. Some families are very busy communicating with teachers, especially when they don't pick up their child from school. Teachers send messages through emails, notes and also the caregivers to who picks up the child. It's very important for communication, that's how trust is built between each other and the child's learning. When you build trust, you build a bond that will help the family and teacher work better to support the child's wellbeing and development. As your child's teacher, it's better when families are involved in their schooling rather than not dealing with the situations and allowing the teacher to handle it all. Communication helps improve a child's academic performance. It allows families to help focus on their strengths and weaknesses and keep doing the routine at school as well as in their own homes.

### **Small Advocacy Action**

In early childhood programs, family is such a big part in every child's life. Children get dropped off and picked up by their loved ones every day. That's why we need to focus on what type of families we as educators are dealing with. We need to be the support team and make each and every one of the families comfortable and get the respect they deserve. The different kinds of families are knowing who they are and how they are different from others. But even though they can be different, we shouldn't favoritism or dislike them because of who they are and where they come from. Every family should be treated with the same respect that they deserve. Some topics we need to focus on when it comes to families are traditional families, single parents, cultural families, multi-generational families, mixed families, and even the same-sex parent families. These different kinds of families exist in our own communities around us. Back then, things were different then how they are now. Growing up I always had my mother and father to either bring me to school or drop me off. But now teaching pre-k, the families that drop off the kids can be one of their guardians, two mommy's or even two dads. It shouldn't matter, as long as they are family.

In early childhood education, parent involvement is very important. It helps build an even stronger relationship between the child and the family member or guardian as well as with the teachers. We educators allow parents to come to the classroom settings and join in activities, events or even trips. When parents are involved, they learn the activities and routines at school.



Therefore, parents can continue these activities at their own homes. It will help strengthen a children's brain development and learning skills. There was an article written by "National

University" which was called "Ask an Expert: What is the Importance of Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education?" In the second paragraph Ms. Ferguson quoted, when parents come into the classroom two things happen, Ferguson says. Teachers learn about a family's culture, and the family sees what a child is learning. This two-way street is a big win for the child's development." Ms. Ferguson is totally right, because sometimes in early childhood we don't see much of their families due to work or busy schedules they have. That's why parent involvement is important for us. It helps us learn about the families and children in a better way. We as educators try our best to fix the issue and involve parents more in activities. For example, when I taught pre-k I was an assistant teacher at the time. I remember when it was a new school year myself and the head teacher did things different. We made the classroom all about the families and who they are. We allowed families to take home a worksheet that they worked on with the children. We asked families if they are comfortable answering questions on their cultures, who they live with, what they can and can't eat and what holidays they celebrate. It helped us teachers get a better picture of what families we have in our class this year. In other words, families should have a saying and be comfortable to answer what they want and what they chose to share. Therefore, parent involvement is a small advocacy in early childhood programs.

### **Large Advocacy Action**

Challenging behaviors may be defined as a large issue of advocacy. Behavior has a big effect on a child's learning and also how they interact with one another. It develops and maintains a positive, and nurturing relationship with the families as well as the teachers. Dealing with classroom behavior issues can be addressed by staying calm, deciding when to deal with the situation, listen to the children, how to proceed and also document the situation. We can follow these steps by giving our trust to the families and children. We need to listen and not jump to conclusions. Challenging behaviors can leave a negative impact on a child's day. It can affect how they learn and also their interacting skills.

In early childhood programs we allow children to be left alone if they are not in the mood, we allow children to feel safe by going to the "cozy area" also known as a "safe place". All children have the choice to use the "Safe Place" whenever they are feeling sad, lonely, or mad. The children can use a "Safe Place" pass at any time during the day to calm their body using a variety of calming techniques and activities that are stored in the "Safe Place." The safe place is a corner in the room where children go to express their feelings and emotions. It is not a time out area. The traditional use for "timeout" is removing a child from the group or activity who is being disruptive to the learning environment or is a danger to themselves or others to the safe place. The area is quiet and closed off where they can be left alone. It provides safe toys and materials for a child to use. The materials contain a rug, a cozy chair, stuffed animals, stressed balls, feelings chart, feelings books etc. These materials allow children to calm themselves down in order to regroup back into the activities.

Advocacy is important in early childhood, why? Because it helps us focus on what we need to look for in the future when it comes to teaching. The objective in early childhood is to improve the lives of kids and families by impacting administrators' and policymakers' feelings and exercises. To do their obligations, public authorities require and welcome the exhortation that very much educated individuals like you give.

### **Commentary**

I decided to choose families as the issue because when I taught preschool, I loved everything about it. Over the years teaching I learned the differences of each and every one of the child who entered my classroom. I went through some hard times where I had to keep pushing myself to be a better teacher for the child. The head teacher and I, we always created events like celebration, parent week, activities, and trips just to get families involved. We wanted to see where our children come from and who raises them. As a teacher we are like a second parent to the child. We make sure they eat their lunch, use the bathroom at all times, don't get hurt, learn and also have fun. We cover all those topics just to make sure they are safe, comfortable and wellbeing. I had children in the past that didn't even have a mother or father and was raised by their grandparents or aunt, and it's sad. But as educators we need to make the best of it and not let no child feel left out in any activity. Families have a big impact on a child and the way they are brought up and how they interact with others around them. All we have to do is our job and make the best of it. Sometimes children think of school as a second home and I would agree with them. Teachers spend more time with the children than their own families do. That's why at the end of the day some children make that sad face or even say aww when we as teachers address "that's

it's time to clean up". We built a bond of trust and support with children and also, we try our best with the families. That's why teachers have parents involved, and parent teacher conferences. It gives us a chance to have better communication face to face.

## References

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