Engaging All Families

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Why engage parents in early education?

- Research demonstrates that:
  - Parenting matters
  - Family involvement matters

- Children benefit academically when parents and educators work together
  - (US Department of Education, PIRC report)
Tenets of Early Childhood Education

- Educating the whole child
  - Cognitive, social/emotional and physical
  - Health

- Supporting the family
  - Social services
  - Parents as children’s first teachers
Changing Conceptualizations of Parents in Early Childhood Education

- Involvement
- Education
- Engagement
Family Involvement Matters

- For children of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- The most at-risk children and families benefit most
Changing Demographics


(U.S. Census Bureau, www.childstats.gov)
Emergent Majority Children

- More likely to be poor
- Fewer likely to have stable medical care
- More likely to be behind in school

- Plagued by systemic failure to thrive
Assumptions Matter In Approach

- Parents want what’s best for their children.
- Parents know best what they need to be better parents.
- Parents learn best when they are involved in selecting the topics and activities they want to focus on.
- Given the proper information and resources, parents will make the best choices for their children.
Parent Empowerment Project - PEP

- Active, parent-driven curriculum designed primarily for and by lower-income African-American parents

- Components that build on cultural strengths
  - Successful Parenting
  - African American Culture
  - Latino American Culture
  - My Vision for the Future
Implementing PEP

Demonstration Project
- Parent Education
- Personal Development
- Career Counseling

Develop Curriculum
- Successful Parenting
- African American Culture
- My Vision for the Future

Pilot Project
- Site 1
- Site 2
- Site 3
- Site 4
- Site 5
- Site 6
- Site 7
- Site 8
- Site 9
- Site 10
PEP Pilot Project Sites

- Audrey L. Smith CDC, San Francisco, CA
- Hartford Elementary, Baltimore, MD
- Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY
- Pine Bluff Public Schools, Pine Bluff, AK
- Penn Center, USC, Beaufort, SC
- Gray’s CDC, Milwaukee, WI
- Florida First Start, Cocoa, FL
- Cameo House, San Francisco, CA
- Tenderloin CDC, San Francisco, CA
- YMCA Garfield, Chicago, IL
Principles of PEP

- Focusing on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members;

- Recognizing, respecting, and addressing families’ needs and any class and cultural differences;

- Embracing a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared
Outcomes of PEP

- A respectful relationship within the parent group that is based on trust and caring.
- Changes in parenting behaviors that lead to appropriate cognitive development of children.
- A conscious awareness of parents’ role as their child’s first teacher.
- Positive behavior change in the way parents function with their children and within their families.
Promising Practices

- Many models have demonstrated strategies for successfully engaging culturally diverse parents
  - Harlem Children’s Zone
  - Parent Involvement Resource Centers
  - Incredible Years Parenting Program
How do we know when programs are effective with diverse populations?

- Community based programs have experienced a wide range of evaluation.
- Need a “pipeline” to become fully evaluated.
- Important to build upon community based programs with strong relationships with culturally specific communities.
Challenges Moving Forward

- Systemic embrace of parent engagement
- Accountability for engaging diverse families
- Evaluation challenges for community-based programs
Essential Recommendations

- Support development and refinement of culturally specific and culturally sensitive parent engagement strategies
- Build an evaluation pipeline