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Bourbon County  Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC)
Finney County LICC
Labette County Family Coalition
Montgomery County LICC
Neosho County Agency Resource Team

Seward County Coalition
Shawnee County Early Childhood Coalition
Southwest KS Interagency Coordinating Council (Ford County)
Woodson County Coalition
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www.kcefe.net
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Introduction

Family engagement is a critical component of high-quality early care and education. Engaging families in their children’s growth and learning can support the healthy social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of young children. These affirmative relationships also support positive life long outcomes for children.

Given the importance of family engagement in promoting positive outcomes for children, the Life Span Institute at Parsons, University of Kansas, and Kansas State Agencies Early Childhood Leadership Team developed a grant proposal submitted to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Members of this group represented various early childhood agencies, including: Kansas Head Start Association, Kansas Parents as Teachers, the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Kansas Children’s Service League, Child Care Aware® of Kansas, , public school districts, and local Infant and Toddler Programs (tiny-k). Many of these stakeholders participated in creating the Kansas School Readiness Framework and the Kansas Early Learning Standards.

The stakeholders reviewed information from the Harvard Family Research Project, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Head Start Association among others. The stakeholders also reviewed other state standards including those in Massachusetts, Maryland and Hawaii. After much examination, discussion and review, the Kansas Early Childhood Family Engagement Standards Development Team developed the Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood. These standards aligned with Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) K-12 Standards, which was endorsed by the Kansas State Board of Education.

The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood is a resource that provides guidance for early childhood providers and educators, families, communities and educational systems on the effective engagement of families. It can be used by the early childhood workforce to examine current family engagement practices and plan future strategies to more fully partner with families in their children’s development and learning.

“Ready families, in a variety of forms, serve as the primary foundation for their children. Ready families provide safe, stable and nurturing environments that promote healthy development and learning.”

— Kansas School Readiness Framework, 2012
Introduction

Purpose

The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood are designed to promote the implementation of family engagement policies and practices both at the state level and local levels. These standards are built on the belief that developing meaningful relationships with families is the cornerstone to engaging all families. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark and Moodie, 2009, p. 3) highlights six key factors in their comprehensive definition of family engagement:

1. Early childhood education programs encourage and validate family participation in decision-making related to their children’s education. Families act as advocates for their children by actively participating in decision-making opportunities.

2. Consistent, two-way communication is facilitated through multiple forms and is responsive to the linguistic preference of the family. Communication is both program and family initiated, timely and continuous, and is about both the child’s educational experience as well as the larger program.

3. Families and early childhood programs collaborate and exchange knowledge. Family members share their unique knowledge and skills through volunteering and actively engaging in events and activities. Teachers seek out information about their students’ lives, families and communities and integrate this information into their curriculum and instructional practices.

4. Early childhood programs and families place an emphasis on creating and sustaining learning activities at home and in the community to enhance each child’s early learning.

5. Families create a home environment that values learning and supports programs. Programs and families collaborate in establishing goals for children both at home and at their early childhood program.

6. Early childhood programs create an ongoing and comprehensive system for promoting family engagement by ensuring that program leadership and teachers and educators are dedicated, trained and receive the supports they need to fully engage families.

These factors support the tenant that true family engagement is more than holding meetings or special events and that the Standards should be used to assess current family engagement strategies. More specifically, the purpose of this resource is to:

- Recognize the importance of family engagement as an essential component of early care and education;
- Provide common language for family engagement across the early childhood service systems and among individual early child care and education professionals; and
- Offer family engagement practices and identify resources to support the implementation of those practices.

The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARE designed to:</th>
<th>Are NOT designed to:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Recognize the importance of the families in the early learning years.</td>
<td>1. Serve as a curriculum creating additional responsibilities for families.</td>
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<td>2. Serve as a guide for appropriate family engagement and partnership practices.</td>
<td>2. Exclude families from a service program, school or activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Serve as a guide for creating quality interactions and partnerships with families.</td>
<td>3. Place all responsibility on an individual family, early childhood educator or service programs.</td>
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Guiding Principles for Unifying Concepts Across All Kansas Early Learning State Documents

1. From birth, children are ready to learn. Parents, families and caregivers are children's first teachers.

2. Learning is a lifelong activity and every environment is a learning environment.

3. Children's success in school and in life is everyone's responsibility. Communities, educational environments, families and children are ready to support success.

4. School readiness involves the whole child in the context of the family and the community. This includes the child's health and development in the following areas: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and general knowledge, communication and literacy.

5. Integrated services are available to children, appropriate to the age, abilities, language and culture of each child.

6. Schools are ready to support the success of each child, recognizing their wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, learning experiences and differences in abilities.

7. A strong, direct connection exists in the early years between the quality of children's health and experiences and their later success in school and in life. School readiness in Kansas depends on involvement from public policy, funding and system supports.

— Kansas School Readiness Data Task Force Final Report (Goffin, 2012, p. 12)
The School Readiness Framework and Family Engagement

The four components of school readiness; the community, educational environment, family and the individual child all function as interdependent systems that have multi-directional influences.

The relationship among these four components in achieving school readiness is shown below in the Kansas School Readiness Framework graphic.

The family component in the School Readiness Framework is the cornerstone of the Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood. The definition of family links to the first standard, Families as Foundation.
Making the Connection

The Kansas Early Learning Standards, and the Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood align with the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards and the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: These standards provide a continuum of learning beginning at birth.
Structure of the Resource

The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood align with the family component of the Kansas School Readiness Framework. The five standards provide a framework for achieving a high level of engagement for families, early childhood educators, community partners and educational systems. Each standard includes a definition, a list of responsible stakeholders, strategies for implementation and the results of effectively engaging families. The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood are also linked with indicators from the Kansas Early Learning Standards.

Following this set of standards is a set of self-assessment pages (see pages 23-29) to aid community stakeholders in assessing their current strengths and opportunities for growth within each of the five standards. In this work, “community” is defined locally and can include a geographic area such as a county, city or neighborhood, or a subset within a community such as an early childhood interagency council or other community groups. By individually completing a self-assessment of strengths and opportunities for growth, each stakeholder can review the strengths and opportunities for growth, allowing the group to collectively identify areas in common across all the programs. For example, a community child care program might identify a strength as communication with families and an opportunity for growth in helping families advocate for themselves. The next step would include building a plan to address common opportunities for growth. Stakeholders can also use this collective data to lift up and celebrate areas of strength. Collectively agreeing on a common plan can help community stakeholders move toward strengthening systemic family engagement and partnership.

Embedding policies and practices in all aspects of program and community work helps ensure families are fully involved in strengthening services, and that programs are meaningfully and intentionally supporting families and children.
The Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood include:

Families as...

- Foundation
- Communicators
- Advocates
- Partners
- Community Members
Families as FOUNDATION

All families are recognized and promoted as their child’s first and most influential teacher.

- Families provide stability in daily experiences for their children.
- Families provide nurturing environments for their children.
- Families promote learning for their children.
- Children have good physical health as appropriate for their development.
- Children demonstrate developmentally appropriate growth and learning skills.
Who is Responsible?

- Families
- Early Childhood Professionals
- Community Partners
- Educational systems

What Can/Should We Do?

- Children live with consistent primary caregivers.
- Families provide basic necessities in a consistent home.
- Children’s health care needs are met.
- Families read, talk and play with their children daily.
- Families practice effective, positive parenting behaviors.
- Families make child-rearing decisions based on knowledge of child development.
- Families access learning opportunities with their children such as going to the library, park, museum, etc.
- Children’s nutritional needs are met.
- Children demonstrate age appropriate skills including:
  - communication
  - cognition
  - social emotional
  - fine motor
  - gross motor
  - self-care

How Will This Help My Child?

- Strengthened families and communities
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse and neglect
- Promotes school readiness
Families as COMMUNICATORS

Early childhood providers and families have effective and ongoing communication.

- Program and family **consistently initiate communication** and **share knowledge** that is timely and continuously facilitated through multiple methods.

- Practices, supports and resources are **responsive to the cultural, ethnic, racial, language and socioeconomic characteristics and preference of families** and their communities.
Families as **COMMUNICATORS**

### Who is Responsible?

- **Families**
- **Early Childhood Professionals**
- **Community Partners**
- **Educational systems**

### What Can/Should We Do?

Early childhood professionals offer formal and informal opportunities for families and educators to **build an interactive relationship**.

- Early childhood professionals **provide families with written policies and procedures**.
- Early childhood professionals **engage in ongoing collaboration** with families to plan and monitor children’s learning goals and progress towards meeting goals.
- Early childhood professionals **seek to understand** families and their children **in the context of their language and culture**.
- Early childhood professionals **integrate families’ traditions and culture into instructional practices, events and activities**.
- Community decision-making groups respond to the cultural and linguistic make-up of their community.
- Families know their child’s strengths and interests and shares them.

### How Will This Help My Child?

- Strengthened families and communities
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse and neglect
- Promotes school readiness
Families as ADVOCATES

Families actively engage as an advocate and decision-maker for their child.

- Families have opportunities that promote informed options and decision-making.

- Programs and communities engage families by providing opportunities to be involved in program leadership and decision-making.

- Programs and communities empower families to be advocates.

- Families are aware of resources for selecting and accessing needed services.
Families as **ADVOCATES**

**Who is Responsible?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Early Childhood Professionals</th>
<th>Community Partners</th>
<th>Educational systems</th>
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**STRATEGIES**

**What Can/Should We Do?**

- Families form **connections** with **peers** and **mentors**.
- Families **participate** and are **engaged in decision-making opportunities**.
- Families have **opportunities to work** with their child’s community partners and educators.
- Families gather and organize important documents (health, education, etc.)
- Early Childhood Professionals, Community Partners and Educational systems ensure families are **engaged** in the decision-making process.

**RESULTS**

**How Will This Help My Child?**

- Strengthened families and communities
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse and neglect
- Promotes school readiness
Families as **PARTNERS**

Successful partnerships exist between families and professionals based upon mutual trust and respect.

- Educational environments *actively engage families* in their children’s education.
- Early childhood professionals use *child and family strengths* as a basis for engaging families.
- **Families promote learning** for their children.
Families as **PARTNERS**

**STAKEHOLDERS**

Who is Responsible?

- Families
- Early Childhood Professionals
- Community Partners
- Educational systems

**STRATEGIES**

What Can/Should We Do?

Early childhood professionals **provide resources and supports flexible, individualized and tailored to the child** and family’s preferences and styles.

Early childhood professionals **partner with families to build on existing abilities and strengthen family’s competence.**

Early childhood professionals and families **consistently communicate and share knowledge.**

Early childhood professionals and families **use mutually agreed upon communication methods.**

Early childhood professionals **work together to develop goals** that are important to the child and family and promote learning.

Early childhood professionals and families **partner in transition planning.**

**RESULTS**

How Will This Help My Child?

- Strengthened families and communities
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse and neglect
- Promotes school readiness
Families as **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Families are **active participants in their communities** and **connect to resources and services**.

- Comprehensive services are **available, affordable and accessible**.
- Communities **provide broad supports for families**.
- Families live in **safe and stable environments**.
# Families as Community Members

## Who is Responsible?
- Families
- Early Childhood Professionals
- Community Partners
- Educational systems

## What Can/Should We Do?
- Communities utilize a needs assessment to identify supports and resources to better support families (What do you have? What is needed?).
- Stakeholders are responsible for cross communication in order to ensure a successful referral system.
- Collaboration exists among community organizations.
- Stakeholders build upon existing services.
- Communities provide tools and supports to help families navigate available services.
- Communities provide networks of support.
- Resources and supports are provided in ways that are flexible.
- Families are aware of resources through a variety of sources, e.g. social media.

## How Will This Help My Child?
- Strengthened families and communities
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse and neglect
- Promotes school readiness
Child Care Aware® of Kansas
www.ks.childcareaware.org

Families Together, Inc.
www.familiestotheringinc.org


Harvard Family Research Project, Early Childhood Education
www.hfrp.org/early-childhood-education

Hawaii Department of Education, Early Childhood
www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/SpecializedPrograms/EarlyChildhood/Pages/home.aspx

Kansas Association for Infant and Early Child Mental Health
www.kaimh.org

Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children
www.kaeyc.net

Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities
www.kccto.org

Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund
www.kschildrenscabinet.org

Kansas Children’s Service League
www.kcsli.org

Kansas Department for Children and Families
www.dcf.ks.gov/Pages/default.aspx

Kansas Department of Health and Environment
www.kdheks.gov

Kansas Division for Early Childhood
www.kdec.org

Kansas Families and Schools Together, Inc.
www.kfast.net

Kansas Head Start Association
www.ksheadstart.org

Kansas Inservice Training
www.kskits.org

Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
www.kpata.org

Kansas State Department of Education: Early Childhood, Special Education and Title Services

Kansas Technical Assistance System Network
www.ksdet asn.org/cms
Maryland Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development
www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

National Association for the Education of Young Children
www.naeyc.org

National Head Start Association
www.nhsa.org

Parents as Teachers
www.parentsasteachers.org

PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
www.pta.org/nationalstandards

The Office of Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs
Use of Worksheets

The following is a set of self-assessment pages to aid community stakeholders in assessing their current strengths and opportunities for growth within each of the five standards. In this work, “community” is defined locally and can include a geographic area such as a county, city or neighborhood, or a subset within a community such as an early childhood interagency council or other community groups. By individually completing a self-assessment of strengths and opportunities for growth, each stakeholder can review the strengths and opportunities for growth, allowing the group to collectively identify areas in common across all the programs. For example, a community child care program might identify a strength as communication with families and an opportunity for growth in helping families advocate for themselves. The next step would include building a plan to address common opportunities for growth. Stakeholders can also use this collective data to lift up and celebrate areas of strength. Collectively agreeing on a common plan can help community stakeholders move toward strengthening systemic family engagement and partnership.

This example includes multiple areas across the standards.

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<th>Possible Collaborative Activities/Action</th>
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| Little Angels Child Care Center | • Parent on Center Advisory Council – participates in policy decisions  
• Parents and staff communicate frequently in-person, text and e-mail  
• Parents and teachers meet every other month and review child’s learning goals and progress | • Provide parenting education on child development and early learning activities at least quarterly | • Plan parenting education opportunities with partners |
| USD Preschool | • Provide parents with samples of child’s work and data weekly  
• Parents frequently volunteer in classroom | • Improve communication opportunities between parents and staff on child’s goals  
• Provide parenting education on learning activities | • Plan parenting education opportunities with partners |
| Public Library | • Provide weekly story times for parent and child together | • Provide story time opportunities also on an evening and Saturday  
• Ensure culture and language is incorporated  
• Need to reach fathers | • Provide parenting education on literacy—appropriate book selection and activities to strengthen parenting education opportunities offered by partner program |
Families as **FOUNDATION**

All families are recognized and promoted as their child’s first and most influential teacher.

- Families provide stability in daily experiences for their children.
- Families provide nurturing environments for their children.
- Families promote learning for their children.
- Children have good physical health as appropriate for their development.
- Children demonstrate developmentally appropriate growth and learning skills.

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**Families as COMMUNICATORS**

Early childhood providers and families have **effective and ongoing communication**.

- Program and family **consistently initiate communication** and **share knowledge** that is timely and continuously facilitated through multiple methods.
- Practices, supports and resources are **responsive to the cultural, ethnic, racial, language and socioeconomic characteristics** and **preference of families** and their **communities**.

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Families as **ADVOCATE**

Families actively engage as an *advocate* and *decision-maker* for their child.

- Families have opportunities that *promote informed options* and *decision-making*.
- Programs and communities engage families by *providing opportunities to be involved* in *program leadership* and *decision-making*.
- Programs and communities empower families to be *advocates*.
- Families are aware of resources for selecting and accessing needed services.

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Successful partnerships exist between families and professionals based upon mutual trust and respect.

- Educational environments actively engage families in their children’s education.
- Early childhood professionals use child and family strengths as a basis for engaging families.
- Families promote learning for their children.

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Families as **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Families are **active participants in their communities** and connect to **resources and services**.

- Comprehensive services are **available, affordable** and **accessible**.
- Communities **provide broad supports for families**.
- Families live in **safe and stable environments**.

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