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Implementing a family involvement project in early childhood classrooms

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Implementing a family involvement project in early childhood classrooms

Abstract
The purpose of this family involvement project is to provide professional development to preschool teachers in the Sioux City Community School District. Through professional development, the teachers will design and implement family involvement activities in their classrooms to achieve the three goals of this project. The research reviewed focused on the benefits of family involvement and why it is important in preschool. Research studies indicated that preschool aged children do benefit from having their families involved in their education.
Implementing a Family Involvement Project

in Early Childhood Classrooms

A Graduate Project
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Chapter I

Introduction

Description of the topic

When starting a new school year, all teachers, but more importantly, early childhood educators rely on getting to know their new students by information that is provided by the family. The saying “parents are their children’s first teacher” is correct, because for the first three to four years of life, they are experts and know what their child can and cannot do, what their interests are, and what their strengths and weaknesses are (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

Ryan (2000) wrote that parents play a major role in the development of all academic areas, including social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Stoodt (1981) wrote that “parents contribute greatly to the language, emotional, and physical development of children. Parents who spend time talking with their children are encouraging language development” (p. 30).

Cervone and O’Leary (1982) wrote that parent involvement is on a continuum that stretches from activities where the parents are passive to where the parents are being an active participant in the educational process. There are four categories to the continuum of engagement with parents: 1) reporting progress, 2) special events, 3) parent education, and 4) parents teaching. Reporting progress refers to one-way communications that can range from teachers sending home newsletters to having parent-teacher conferences. Special events are activities that can range from open house to an end of the year picnic. Within these activities parents are demonstrating a low level of involvement with participation in intermittent events. Parent education refers to opportunities for parents to learn more about their children’s programs and
parenting issues; teachers may be creating a parent bulletin board or workshops on topics of interest to parents. Parents teaching refer to parents participating more actively in their child’s education, including helping their child with worksheets sent home or implementing activities that address parent objectives on the child’s individual education plan (IEP).

Epstein et al. (2002) developed a framework for defining six different types of involvement. The six types are: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision making, and 6) collaborating with community. Parenting is done through home visits, parent education, and family support programs to assist the families in improving their parenting skills. Communicating is done through conferences with every parent at least once per year, language translators to assist families, and regular teacher communications sent home. Volunteering is when parents work in the classroom to assist the teacher. Learning at home is when teachers provide information and ideas to families on how they can work with their child at home. Decision making is assisting parents to take an active role in school decisions. Collaborating with community is identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to assist with families.

Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2001) wrote:

Children who do well in school tend to have parents who have close relationships with teachers and caregivers, reinforcing the traditional belief in the importance of such partnerships. The teacher who has extensive contact with the child’s family can better understand the child as an individual and have an appreciation for the contexts in which the child functions, the parents’ aims and hopes for the child, and the values of the child’s culture. When parents and teachers are teamed in such collaboration, the adults can do
the work to build consistency in the world of the child, rather than leaving it up to the child to integrated disparate contexts. (p. 181)

Rationale

Involving families in an early childhood classroom is important for “parents to develop a strong, positive attachment to the school and vice versa, a positive attachment of students to the staff and program of the school is more likely. Parents and school personnel are then able to work together to motivate desirable academic and social performance among students” (Comer & Haynes, 1991, p. 274).

According to Henderson et al. (2007), “when schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more” (p.2).

Ryan (2000) wrote “parents are the closest relationships that a young child has. Children trust and love their parents unconditionally and will respond to what their parents do more than any other person in their lives” (p. 39).

Morris and Taylor (1997) wrote that there are a number of other educational benefits when families are involved in children’s schools. It increases self-esteem and improves behavior for the child and there is a better parent and community support of the school.

In 2007, the Sioux City Community School District (SCCSD) completely revamped their early childhood special education programs. Originally each preschool classroom was a half-day segregated special education room. The classrooms have changed to a full-day integrated classroom. Segregated special education classrooms have only students who are on IEPs. Integrated classrooms have both typically developing and students who are on IEPs, and are
taught by a teacher who is certified in both general education and special education. Parent engagement is important with all children, but especially children with developmental delays.

In 2008, SCCSD implemented family involvement in each preschool classroom. There were no clear guidelines on how to include families into the classroom, but parents signed a contract at the beginning of the year stating that they would complete at least fifteen hours of involvement each month. In 2009, the Preschool Director asked each teacher to plan one monthly activity that involved families inside the classroom. Each teacher implemented his or her own family activity differently. Cervone and O’Leary (1982) stated “parent involvement programs must provide a range of activities” (p. 49).

With this family involvement project, families will be completing activities at home with their children that will be “concrete and feasible suggestions about what behaviors and activities they can use with their children at home to consolidate and extend the learning taking place in the classroom” (Epstein, 2007b, p. 20). In addition, families will be invited into the classroom monthly to do activities together as a family; and families will be educated about developmentally appropriate preschool practices. “If constructed and implemented well, parent involvement programs can provide the linkage between home, community, and the school that is essential to the healthy growth and development of children” (Comer & Haynes, 1991, p. 227).

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this family involvement project is to provide professional development to preschool teachers in the SCCSD. Through professional development, the teachers will design and implement family involvement activities in their classrooms to achieve the three goals of this project. Goal one is to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children in the SCCSD preschool classrooms. Goal two is educate families on
developmentally appropriate practices within the preschool classroom and to encourage families to work with their children. "Early childhood teachers, in collaboration with families, are responsible for ensuring that the program promotes the development and enhances the learning of each individual child served" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 111). Goal three is to enhance the family involvement activities in other preschool classrooms in SCCSD.

**Importance of the Project**

Currently the SCCSD does not a family involvement program in place. Each classroom teacher is in charge of his or her own family involvement activities throughout the year. The monthly activities that take place in the classrooms are created and implemented by the teacher, so the actual family involvement varies from classroom to classroom. Also the amount of family involvement is different in each classroom; some teachers do the bare minimum while others give families multiple opportunities for involvement. There has also not been much direction from the Preschool Director on the subject of family involvement, so each teacher is left to create his or her own.

**Terminology**

The list of terms is defined for the purposes of this family involvement project.

*Boundaries:* "limits, togetherness and separateness" with who or what is in the family (Christian, 2006, p 5).

*Cognitive development:* "is also called intellectual development" and is done through experiences to foster "the child’s ability to process information, remember, classify, solve problems, acquire language, read, and understand mathematics" (Dodge, Heroman, Colker, & Bickart, 2010a, p. 32).

*Collaboration:* preschool teachers working together for a common goal.
Creative Curriculum: a curriculum that is “a research based overview of child development; guidance on the teacher’s role in addressing content in literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology” that the Sioux City Community School District uses in its early childhood programs (Dodge et al., 2010a, p. xv).

Developmentally appropriate practices: “meeting children where they are—which means that teachers must get to know them—and enabling them to reach goals that are challenging and achievable” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. xii).

Family: “significant people who care for the child: aunts, uncles, grandparents, foster parents, neighbors, adoptive parents, friends and parents” (Keyser, 2006, p. xii).

Family–school meetings: “time for teachers and parents to learn from each other. They can be special events or part of open houses and back-to-school nights” (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 87).

Get Ready to Read: a program that is “designed to support educators, parents, and young children in the development of early literacy activities in the years before kindergarten” (National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc, 2011).

GOLD assessment/scores: “is an authentic, observational assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten” (Heroman, Burts, Berke, & Bickart, 2010, p. vii).

GOLD-online system: an online assessment website that SCCSD teachers use for typing in anecdotal notes, pictures, videos, and lesson plans to share with families.

Home visits: the teaching staff involved in a child’s classroom (teacher and para-educators) meets with the family, typically at their home. They have conversations about the classroom and the child (Henke, 2011).
**Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** an individualized plan for children who have delays in cognitive, social-emotional, speech, and behavioral development. The plan is written with specific goals for the child to accomplish in one year from the IEP date.

**Integrated classroom:** a preschool classroom where a special education teacher teaches 20 students, eleven of whom are typically developing and nine who are on IEPs.

**K-W-L chart:** a visual document that represents what people know about a topic, what they want to learn about a topic, and what they have learned overall about a topic.

**Low-income:** “being unable to provide basic necessities,” which are “adequate housing, food, and health care” (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 6)

**Parental involvement:** “parents working together with schools to assist learning” (Kopacsi & Koopmans, 1992, p. 1).

**Partnership:** “is a relationship between equals; each person in a partnership is equally valued for his or her knowledge and contribution to the relationship” (Keyser, 2006, p. 4).

**Physical development:** “includes children’s gross-motor (large-muscle) and fine-motor (small-muscle) skills” (Dodge et al., 2010a, p. 29).

**Preschool Initiative:** a group of preschool programs that are part of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for 4-year olds in Sioux City, IA. SCCSD is the leader of the Preschool Initiative in Sioux City, and is joined with 30 private preschool programs.

**Professional development:** regular sessions where teachers and paraprofessionals collaborate and learn new strategies to implement in their classrooms.

**Segregated special education classrooms:** a self-contained preschool classroom where a special education teacher teaches eight to ten students on IEPs.
**Social-emotional development:** for young children it “involves learning how to understand their own and others’ feelings, regulate and express their emotions appropriately, build relationships with others, and interact in groups” (Dodge et al., 2010a, p. 28-29).

**Stability:** “firm, steady, not easily thrown off balance” (Fuller, 2004, p. 17).

**Staff development:** “process that improves the job-related knowledge, skills, or attitudes of school employees” (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p. 42).

**Typically developing:** preschool students who are not on IEPs.

**Summary**

This project reviewed studies of family involvement, implementation of professional development for teachers, and resource books on family involvement and the relationship between family involvement and the overall growth in social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children. I considered the following questions:

1) Does family involvement affect a child’s academic growth in social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children?

2) How can preschool teachers educate families on developmentally appropriate practices within the preschool classroom?

3) What can preschool teachers implement in their classroom to increase family involvement with all parents?
Chapter II

Methodology

Procedures to Develop Project

I began this graduate project because I strongly believe in family involvement. The majority of the sources for this project were from books and from ERIC, an electronic database. The terms used for searches included: family involvement, benefits, parent involvement, preschool, professional development, Creative Curriculum, parental involvement, early childhood education, teaching philosophy, home visits, family involvement activities, family-school meetings, partnerships, and staff development. There was a large amount of information on family involvement found in resource books that I had in my own classroom or that I retrieved from my local library. Family involvement activities were found in early childhood journals and on ERIC. Soon after reading several studies, I changed from parent to family because the term parent has changed over the past years. The studies that I read were on the benefits of family involvement, which included strategies on how to implement family involvement into classrooms.

After having no set guidelines from the Preschool Director and seeing other preschool teachers implement their family involvement activities differently, I decided to create a professional development plan to implement a research based family involvement project with the preschool teachers in my district. Professional development in preschool is created and implemented by the Building Leadership Team (BLT). The BLT consists of the Preschool Director and two integrated preschool teachers, which includes me. Since I help with implementing professional development on a regular basis, I spoke with my Preschool Director and asked her if I could present my project with our staff. The Preschool Director agreed that our staff could benefit from this project.
Preschool teachers in the SCCSD will participate in the monthly professional development. SCCSD has weekly professional development scheduled on Mondays of each week. The amount of professional development each week is 35 minutes, 60 minutes, or 90 minutes. The amount of time each week is pre-determined by the head of professional development for SCCSD. Family involvement professional development will be held on the second Monday of each month during normal professional development hours. This will take place during the first year of implementing the family involvement project due to the time needed to create activities that are meaningful and planning the family-school meetings to educate the families.

I will be leading the family involvement professional development with the assistance of the Preschool Director. All twelve SCCSD preschool teachers are expected to attend each professional development session. The Preschool Director of SCCSD does invite the thirty Preschool Initiative preschool teachers but most teachers do not attend due to schedule conflicts or because the professional development is during non-paid hours for the teachers.

There will be ten professional development sessions scheduled throughout the school year, starting in August and ending in May. At each professional development session, teachers will be able to ask questions or share comments about family involvement with all the SCCSD preschool teachers. If teachers need assistance between professional development sessions, they can contact the Preschool Director or me.

Literature Review

Benefits of family involvement.

In this section I have reviewed various family involvement studies that were conducted in early childhood classrooms in the United States. The results from the various studies
emphasized the benefits of family involvement in early childhood classrooms. By reading these studies, I answered my research question #1, does family involvement affect a child’s academic growth in social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Fantuzzo, McWayne, and Perry (2004) conducted a Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) with families of 144 preschool children enrolled in Head Start programs in Pennsylvania. Children were 46 months to 68 months old and 46% were male. Ninety-six percent of the families were African American and 4% were other ethnic groups. The parent ages were 18 to 74 years old, 73% were mothers, 8% were fathers, 9% were grandparents, and 10% were other relatives or foster parents. Fifty-one percent of the parents were unemployed; 26% of those parents had less than a high school education; 31% of parents were graduated from high school; and 43% of parents attended at least some type of college or vocational school. The families completed the FIQ, which measured the family members’ involvement in their children’s education. The questionnaire asked the primary caregivers to mark rarely, sometimes, often or always about their experiences with school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. The findings demonstrated that both school-based involvement and home-school conferencing were not as important as home-based involvement in predicting children’s growth at the end of the year. The researchers also stated that it was clear that parents want to be more involved in their children’s education, but it is up to the schools to make sure that parents are partners in the education of their children.

In an Even Start study that was conducted by Kopacsi and Koopmans (1992), the researchers wanted to learn if Even Start was attaining its goal of involving parents as active partners in their children’s learning. The researchers conducted a study that involved Even Start and non-Even Start preschool classrooms in Newark, NJ. They surveyed thirty-four parents
whose children were in the Even Start program and a sample of 132 non-program parents. The survey was based on the conceptual frameworks for parental involvement that Epstein and Becker (1987) created together and that Cervone and O’Leary (1982) created together. Kopasci and Koopmans also surveyed eleven Even Start teachers and eleven non-program teachers to learn their attitudes and practices of parental involvement. The survey results from both the teachers and the parents were positive about parent involvement. Both teachers and parents believed that schools could do better on inviting parents into the school and on completing parent-teacher conferences. Over 90% of the parents believed that most of their child’s learning will take place before going to kindergarten. The parents also believed that the family is responsible for educating their children. Teachers completed a survey on what type of parental involvement they value as important or which they need assistance developing. The majority of the teachers mentioned that workshops for parents were their strongest type of involvement. The workshops included building skills in parenting, communication from schools to home, and understanding report cards. The area that some teachers mentioned needing to improve was workshops for parents on creating better home conditions for learning.

Parker et al. (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of parent involvement in Head Start and its impact on the parents, the children in Head Start, and their siblings. The researchers followed two cohorts at two Head Start agencies in a large urban city. The first cohort of 132 four year old children attended Head Start from September 1991 through June 1992 and kindergarten from September 1992 to June 1993. The second cohort of 57 four year old children attended Head Start from September 1992 to June 1993. The first cohort’s 36 older siblings were followed as they attended elementary school from September 1992 to June 1993 and were included as part of the first cohort follow-up for the family. From this study, the area of parent
participation in Head Start positively related to the home learning environment. The researchers measured at the beginning and end of the Head Start year. From the initial questionnaires, parents in both cohorts reported that they were helping their children learn a moderate number of school readiness skills and provided a moderate number of play materials to their children in their home. Over the years that the researchers followed the children and questioned the parents, the number of school readiness skills the parents helped their child learn and the number of play materials in their home both increased.

Ferlazzo (2011) composed a journal article about the difference between family involvement and family engagement. Family involvement is typically when the teachers generate ideas and then tell the parents about them. Family engagement is when teachers listen to what parents think and worry about. Both involvement and engagement are important in schools, but Ferlazzo stated that family engagement can produce even better results for the students, for the families, and for the schools.

Epstein (2007b) wrote that families are the children’s first and most important source of learning. Teachers can learn from the parents and the parents can learn from the teachers. The High/Scope curriculum has family involvement in its programs for several reasons, which include bridging the gap between home and school; improving parent’s understanding of children; promoting child development at home; and enriching the classroom.

Griffith (1996) performed a study with a sample of 42 elementary schools in a large suburban school district. Parents filled out a survey. The survey was sent home to the youngest or only child in the household who attended the school. The survey consisted of 41 items. The parents responded to 30 items using a 4-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The remaining questions on the survey were close-ended that asked about the
possible services their child might receive in school. There were 11,317 parents who responded
to the survey. Griffith calculated the correlation between parental involvement and the state’s
criterion-referenced test (CRT) scores. The results showed that schools that had higher levels of
parental involvement also had higher student CRT scores.

**Family Involvement and Socio-economical Factors.**

In this section I have read journal articles, research studies, and resource books about
family involvement and socio-economical factors that are an aspect of early childhood
classrooms. From the information I gained from the articles, studies and resource books, I
answered my research question #1, does family involvement affect a child’s academic growth in
social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children.

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) wrote about the socio-economical factors with preschool
aged children. The average four-year old living in poverty is typically developmentally eighteen
months behind their typical-aged peer. Children that grow up in low-income households
typically have more limited experiences with language than other children in different socio-
economical backgrounds. The children from low-income families hear fewer words and engage
in fewer conversations. The acquisition of language and communicative skills is learned at a
young age, so if children are not being spoken to or hear words being used in their home, they
will not develop a strong vocabulary base to use when they are older.

Christian (2006) created a family system continuum describing that in order to work with
our families, we have to understand the families first. Each family is diverse in different ways,
such as culture, economic status, work, family make-up, and so on. There are six family
characteristics of the family system continuum; they are relevant for teachers to know about
when working with families. They are 1) boundaries; 2) roles; 3) rules; 4) hierarchy; 5) climate;
and 6) equilibrium. Boundaries are the limits that each family has; some are open to new people, while others are closed and restrictive. In families, all the individual members have roles. Rules are something that all children bring into the classroom, some are spoken and unspoken. Teachers need to help children distinguish between rules at home and school rules. Family hierarchy is a characteristic that is related to the decision maker and has power in the family. The climate of the families is affected by many factors of culture, economic status, and educational level. The equilibrium of families and how consistent they are at home affects learning at school.

Henke (2011) described the Teacher Home Visit Program in the Maplewood Richmond Heights school district in St. Louis. In 2000, the district had low test scores and a high dropout rate. The district decided to change the way the schools worked with parents, so that parents felt more connected and more involved in their child’s education. The district did not mandate all teachers to complete home visits, but the majority of the teachers did. Home visits occurred during non-contract hours. New teachers received training that focused on relationship building skills, learning how to establish a partnership with families, and having conversations about academics and attendance. The district conducted nearly 700 home visits each school year. All employees of the district, from school board members to principals to teachers to bus drivers, built relationships with the students and the families. In 2011 the school district served 1,200 students. Half of the school’s families lived in poverty. The school population was 42 percent black and 45 percent white; 13 percent of these students were from other countries. In three years after implementing the Teacher Home Visit Program, the district saw success. In the 2010-2011 school year, discipline referrals throughout the district were down 45 percent and parent attendance at each school’s first open house was up by 20 percent.
Turney and Kao (2009) used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) to examine race and immigrant differences in parental involvement at school. The data from ECLS-K was a multistage sample of students in approximately 1,000 schools in 100 countries. All students were in kindergarten in the fall of 1998. The study also included a sample of 12,954 parents of kindergarteners who participated in the first, second, and fourth waves of data collection. The researchers deleted data on children of Pacific Islander, Native American, and multiracial mothers, because the groups were too small to analyze. The results were that 63% of the mothers were native-born whites. Native-born Blacks were 12% and Hispanics were 6% of the sample. The majority of the parents reported that they were involved in their child’s school by either attending a parent-teacher conference (86%) or going to an open house (75%). 51% of the parents mentioned that their work schedule was one event that interfered with their involvement.

Dodge et al. (2010a) wrote about getting to know families. They commented that each family is different and teachers can’t treat them all the same way or the families won’t respond or be involved. If teachers vary the way they communicate with families, then the families will be more involved. Family structure has changed over the past years. The traditional family with two parents is not as common as it once was. Many children are growing up with one parent, are being raised by grandparents or other relatives, or have two mothers or two fathers. The authors recommended keeping an open mind about what is considered to be a family. The life experiences, such as education of parents and socioeconomic status, influence the way the families relate to their children. Cultural differences also make up how families interact at school. Culture affects the way people communicate and interact with others.

Family Involvement Activities.
In this section I read early childhood resource books, articles from journals, and family involvement research projects that focused on implementing activities either at school or at home. After reviewing family involvement activities, I answered my research question #2, what can preschool teachers implement in their classrooms to increase family involvement with all parents.

From the study that was conducted by Fantuzzo et al. (2004) in Head Start programs in Pennsylvania, the results showed that parent involvement activities were associated with student learning. The home-based activities, such as parents reading to their child; having conversations about school with their child; and providing a place for educational activities produced the strongest relationships.

Pelo (2002) wrote that families need to have a visible presence in classrooms. In this article she wrote about the different activities that she has done in her own classroom, ranging from family books to having families inside the classroom. She also wrote that teachers need to make the life of the classroom visible to families. She gave examples of how to show families what their children are learning. Her last suggestion to teachers was to use parent meetings as opportunities for shared discussions and debate.

Henderson et al. (2007) gave examples of how to include parents in their child’s education, including having the parents visit the classroom so they can see what is happening in the classroom; having class meetings so families and teachers can learn from each other; and having the parents volunteer in the classroom.

Fuller’s book (2004) was written for preschool parents. One of the chapters in the book was about exciting your preschooler about learning. Inside that chapter there are ideas for doing
activities at home that foster learning. They included dramatic play, art activities, physical activities, cooking activities, writing activities, and reading activities.

Keyser (2006) suggested ways to create a family partnership. These included a family handbook that has information about the classroom; a philosophy statement that communicates to the parents what the purpose of the classroom is; a family questionnaire in which parents are asked questions written by the teacher, asking parents about special events which can be done throughout the school year; and communicating with parents through newsletters and bulletin boards. Keyser also suggested having parent meetings that cover discussion topics that are either created by the teacher or through the questionnaire completed the parents.

Frierson and Hills (1981) created an early childhood resource guide for involving parents in preschool classrooms in New Jersey. The resource guide gave lots of examples of how to involve parents in the preschool program, including being a room parent to help in the classroom; parents taking classes to learn new skills; and parent participation in classroom activities. The authors wrote about creating work plans, which are activities completed by teachers to increase parental involvement, and gave three examples of how to write them. The activities were based on the needs and interests of parents, children, and program personnel. Each activity has goals and objectives to increase parent involvement. Each activity included written specifics of how to complete the activity so it is easy for teachers to follow.

Kirmani (2007) mentioned that building strong home-school partnerships is very important. One way that teachers can do this is by using the families as a resource. Teachers can invite families into the classroom to talk about their cultures or family traditions by sharing special songs, dances, and food from their culture. Schools that create environments where
children and their families feel accepted, empower all families to make positive contributions to children’s learning.

Mayer, Ferede, and Hou (2006) discussed five ways to use storybooks to increase family involvement. The first way was to create a welcome center for families in the classroom. Teachers collect books that portray the families and place them in the welcome center. The authors recommended that parents include books that also show cultures and languages that represent the classroom. A second way was to read a family involvement book and ask the children how their families can support their learning. The authors suggested changing the meaning of family to include people who take part in the child’s life and raise the child, so all children can have someone involved in the activities if their mother and father were unable to participate. A third suggestion was to read books that incorporate families into the content of the curriculum. For example, if the children are learning about jobs, then teachers might read a book that shows families introducing their children to a dentist’s office. A fourth example was to include families as guest readers to the class by reading to the whole group or individuals. The final suggestion was to send books home to have families read them together at home.

Creative Curriculum is a comprehensive curriculum designed for children birth to kindergarten age. Dodge et al. (2010b) reported research on the benefits of family involvement in the early childhood classroom. The assessment tool that teachers use with the Creative Curriculum is called GOLD. With GOLD, teachers are able to include parents in the education process by sharing anecdotal notes, pictures, and videos with parents via an online system. Parents are also able to see the lesson plans that teachers create. Teachers are able to create reports that give parents examples of what their children are doing and activities to do at home to enhance their learning at home.
Epstein (2007a) reported the benefits of family involvement. The first was to bridge the gap between home and school. This could be done through incorporating familiar materials and activities from the home into the classroom. The second was to improve parents' understanding of children. Parents base their thoughts of what preschool should be from past experiences; since preschool practices have changed over the past years due to research, parents may need more information about current practices. The third was to promote child development at home. Since children spend more time at home than in school, teachers need to give suggestions to parents on ways to apply what they are learning during school to home experiences. The final reason was to enrich the classroom. Parents should be able to volunteer in the classroom, share interests or talents, or they could donate items for the classroom.

Epstein (2007b) wrote about teachers building relationships with families. She recommended that teachers encourage parents to be active in their children's learning. Teachers can provide different opportunities for parents to be involved in the classroom by participating in the classroom with their child; volunteering in the classroom; and interacting both formally and informally with the teacher. Epstein also mentioned two other strategies that involve families. One was to educate the parents about the curriculum. This could be done through newsletters, sending home excerpts from the curriculum books, and parent meetings. When parents expect certain ways of teaching, such as direct teaching of skills through worksheets, but do not see that in a classroom, then they will need to learn what appropriate practices in preschool are. Teachers can do this through displaying and explaining the children’s work. The second way to involve families is to provide information on how to extend learning at home. Teachers should give simple strategies that families can begin to include in their daily routine, such as having conversations on the way to and from school, or setting the table for supper.
Dodge et al. (2010a) wrote about how to include families in the early childhood classroom. The first method mentioned was for parents to complete an enrollment survey. Surveys that include open-ended questions will prompt parents to answer with more insightful responses. Home visits are a great way to get to know the children and families before the school year begins. In the classroom, teachers can create a welcoming environment for families. A family welcome area where the teacher can post information for families will support communication and include them in the classroom. Creating a welcome booklet that introduces the teacher’s philosophy and goals for the children, describing the activities that their children will do, and outlining the policies and procedures of the classroom will allow parents to gain more information about the classroom.

Cervone and O’Leary (1982) suggested that, in order to have a good parent involvement program, teachers need to include varied strategies to keep everyone connected. Teachers, who want parents to move from being passive to a more active role in their child’s education, need to plan intentional activities to support the parents.

In October 1999 the United States Secretary of Education, Richard Riley and the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala hosted the Partnership of Family Involvement in Education Teleconference on the subject of involving fathers in the education process. Riley and Shalala suggested strategies on how to include fathers in education. Strategies included: be more welcoming; keep fathers informed of what is happening at school; involve fathers on an on-going basis; and create new activities that will involve fathers more than mothers (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Comer and Haynes (1991) conducted a study with the Yale Child Study Center Team to explore the parent involvement issue in two elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut, in
1968. Both of the schools were located in low-income neighborhoods. One hundred percent of the students were black and 80% of the students had free or reduced lunch. One school was k-4 and had a school population of 250 students, while the other school was k-5 and had a school population of 520 students. The researchers observed the schools and came to the conclusion that the schools had interactions between staff and students that led to low levels of school success, which then led to low parental involvement. Over a three to five year period, a nine-element program called School Development Program was developed. The program had five features; 1) Three levels of involvement with different tasks and responsibilities, which were a) general participation of parents; b) helping in the classroom; and c) parents elected by parent groups to help on a school planning and management team; 2) Parents participation at their comfort level, 3) Each level allowing different kinds of responsibility, 4) All levels allowing parents to play meaningful roles, and 5) All levels involving a large percentage of parents. The researchers found that the turnout for general activities at the third level was 15-30 parents attending activities initially at the beginning of the study of parent participants. After implementing changes, the parent participation increased up to 400 parents attending the same activities years later. The researchers mentioned that meaningful parent participation is needed for effective schooling.

The United States Department of Education and the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (2000) created a kit for educators to use when trying to increase family involvement. The kit included notes from speakers and overheads of the presentations, a list of publications about family involvement, and a video clip from the October 28, 1999, "Father's Matter!" teleconference. The materials in the kit are used for professional development. The kit
was created for organizations to use and then to add their own information to spark new discussions of family involvement.

Henderson et al. (2007) described seven steps to create a family partnership with schools. The first step was to complete an attitude check to explore and discuss teacher and parent attitudes on working together and sharing responsibility. The discussion is done through pre-arranged topics that will spark discussions on their attitudes towards the statements. The second step is to complete a conference checklist. The checklist has three-stages; before a conference, during the conference, and after the conference. The third step was the district creating a policy on family-school partnerships. The policy should include personnel policies that support partnerships, the partnership plan, school-home communication, and learning materials for families. The fourth step was to have a family welcome questionnaire so teachers can learn more about their families. The fifth step was completing a parent review. The parent review can be an interview that teachers do with parents to learn more about the children's interests, talents, strengths, and fears. The sixth step was conducting a parent volunteer survey. Parents would fill out a survey to list when they would be available to volunteer and what type of activities they would like to do. The seventh step was conducting a school climate survey. Information from this survey was used to develop an action plan, to plan activities for teachers and families, and to set priorities for improvement.

**Barriers to Family Involvement.**

In this section I read various studies, resource books, and journal articles about barriers of family involvement in preschool classrooms. The information learned from these studies, books, and articles helped me answer my research question #3, what can preschool teachers implement in their classroom to increase family involvement with all parents.
Keyes (2000) described factors that affect the parent-teacher partnership. These factors are the differences between teachers' and parents' cultures and values and how families have changed over the past years. Keyes mentioned that teachers often come from a different socio-economic class, race, or ethnic group than that of their students. The perspectives of the parents influence involvement, especially when there are language differences and lack of education that might cause parents to be intimidated by teachers. In addition, family makeup has evolved over the past years, changing from traditional families to more nontraditional experiences, such as families with both parents working, single-parent families, adoptive families, and blended families. Parents of today may not be as accessible as they were in the past when a mother typically stayed at home.

Espinosa (1995) wrote an article about Hispanic parent involvement in early childhood programs. There are many reasons why Hispanic families are not involved within the early childhood classroom, but Espinosa listed strategies on how to involve the parents in the classroom. When first making contact with a Hispanic family, she recommended using face-to-face meetings carried out in the families' primary language. She mentioned that notes and newsletters that are sent home have been proven to be ineffective, even when written in Spanish. Several meetings may be needed for the family to gain trust and be an active participant with their child. After trust has been gained, all communication being sent home must be translated to Spanish. Also having translators available during meetings at school will help the families to be more comfortable in the classroom or school. The last strategy that she mentioned would be having community outreach available for the families. The families could benefit from family literacy programs, English as Second Language (ESL) programs, medical and dental services, and other services that would include the family in community activities.
Parker et al. (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of parent involvement in the Head Start classroom. Data suggested reasons why some families are not involved as much as others. One reason was if the mother was pregnant. In the study, mothers who were pregnant participated far less than the other mothers in the Head Start classrooms. Mothers who just had a baby or had younger toddlers participated much less in school activities, because they felt they were being judged by the teaching staff. Other reasons for less parent involvement included daily parenting problems and parents who were frustrated by their children.

Kirmani (2007) wrote that families that have emigrated from other countries are often unsure about the expectations of the new school and may hesitate to join in school activities or be involved. Language can sometimes be a barrier for home-school communication. Teachers should use computer-based translators if they are unable to use a human translator so notes and invitations can be sent home in the family’s native language.

Dolan and Gentile (1996) conducted a study that explored ten preschool teachers’ and ten mothers’ attitudes towards parental involvement. Both sets of individuals answered a questionnaire. The survey asked teachers how often they communicated with parents and how they felt about unplanned visits from parents. Mothers responded about their willingness to volunteer and whether they were aware of activities that, if done at home, would support learning at school. The teachers’ viewpoints on communication showed that only 50% of teachers communicated daily, 10% communicated several times a week, 40% communicated weekly, 70% communicated through letters and phone calls, and 30% didn’t specify how they communicated. Not communicating on a regular basis with parents was a barrier that prevents parents’ involvement in activities either, at school or doing activities at home to further learning. The mothers unanimously responded that it was important to be involved in their children’s
education. The mothers stated that they attempted to work with the schools and wanted to continue working with the schools as their children grew older.

Cervone and O’Leary (1982) developed a continuum of parent involvement. The two sides of the continuum were parents as passive participants and parents as active participants. Not all parents can be active in their child’s education, because of barriers in their life. Some barriers include cultural, language, family situations, or financial issues. The flow of communication needs to be consistent or parents will be out of the loop with what is going on in the classroom.

Green (2003) sampled a series of early childhood educator regional training sessions conducted between June 2001 and February 2002 in a large southern state. The early childhood educators were able to attend multiple breakout sessions. The educators were from a variety of public and private early childhood programs. Of the 350 educators who were given surveys, 314 were partially or fully completed. Almost all of the educators were females, with 51.6% of the educators being Caucasian. Almost 90% of the early childhood educators worked in a public or private program. The survey measured the educators’ efforts to involve fathers in their programs. The response options to the questions ranged from one as never to five as always. The results indicated that 50% of the educators often or always make efforts to involve fathers in their classrooms. Less than 20% seldom or never made an effort to involve fathers. The researcher mentioned that sending home written correspondence to fathers, even if they lived apart from the child, was a strong predictor of successful involvement. Inviting fathers to the classroom to participate in activities can have a positive outcome. If fathers are regularly invited into the classroom, it will encourage them to be involved.
Henderson, et al. (2007) wrote that changing family patterns present a challenge for family involvement. The authors reported that in the 2000 Census, over four-million children were living with grandparents, and that one-fourth of the grandparents had sole-custody of the children. The Census also reported that half of the low-income children live with only one parent, and half of those children move every year.

**Professional Development for Family Involvement.**

In this section I read professional development studies for preschool teachers to increase family involvement. From reading these studies, I have answered my all research questions, 1) does family involvement affect a child's academic growth in social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children; 2) how can preschool teachers educate families on developmentally appropriate practices within the preschool classroom; and 3) what can preschool teachers implement in their classroom to increase family involvement with all parents.

Morris and Taylor (1997) collected qualitative data from 105 students enrolled in a School/Community Relations course over four semesters. Eighty percent of the students were elementary education majors and 20% were early childhood education majors. Students completed pre and post self assessments related to their ability to work with parents. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale, with one as low and five as high. At the end of the semester, the students wrote reflective statements that related to the four main course requirements completed in the course. The requirements were conducting parent interviews, developing a parent involvement education plan for one year, compiling a parental involvement notebook, and planning and conducting a parent workshop. The results from the pre and post self assessments showed that the students enhanced their comfort and confidence levels in working with parents.
In order for teachers to be successful in working with families, teachers should complete a course about family involvement in college.

Bunse and Deardorff (2001) created a Family Consultant Training (FCT) project to provide training to teachers providing services to young children with disabilities and their families. The project was set up to enhance services by providing training and technical assistance to early childhood special professionals and paraprofessionals. There were 160 participants that took the FCT trainings in Idaho and Oregon. A total of 1440 families were served by the participants. The majority of the participants were early intervention and Early Head Start teachers. After each module was completed, participants were scored on their successful completion. Of the ten modules available, the 160 participants completed 50% of the possible modules. After each module the participants completed a survey, and the results showed what they liked about the FCT modules, which included: the family focus, the information was practical and useful, and the teaching about positive touch to families.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) wrote about the five models of staff development, which are 1) individually-guided staff development, 2) observation or assessment, 3) involvement in a development and or improvement process, 4) training, and 5) inquiry. Individually-guided model is when teachers plans and pursues activities that will promote their own learning. The observation and or assessment model gives teachers feedback regarding their classroom performance. Involvement in the development and or improvement model engages teachers in developing an improvement plan for a specific problem. The training model involves teachers gaining new skills. The inquiry model requires teachers to identify an area of interest and collect data to make changes in instruction. The model of involvement in a development and or improvement process would be the best type of model for implementing a family involvement
professional development plan. Teachers would gain more information about family involvement through reading, discussing, observing, training, and implementing activities in their classrooms.

Weiss (1996) reviewed teacher certification materials from 51 state Departments of Education to document parent involvement language in early childhood certification. She also surveyed at least two teacher education programs from the 22 states that mentioned parent involvement in their certification requirements. The results suggested that many states do not mention working with families. Out of the 22 states that do mention parent involvement in certification requirements, eight states require it for both early childhood and K-12 certification, five states only have it for early childhood certification, and nine states have it only for K-12 certification.

Goble and Horm (2010) stated that all early childhood professionals need professional development; they must enrich their knowledge so they can implement research based practices. For teachers to have high quality classrooms, professional development must be ongoing. The field of early childhood education has changed over the past years. To maximize professional development, teachers need to set goals, plan, and seek professional development opportunities to acquire ongoing knowledge and skills. From professional development, teachers can modify their own style and develop new ways of relating and interacting with children and others. The authors suggested writing a teaching philosophy. Early childhood educators should review their philosophy often, and make changes that reflect any new knowledge learned. The quality of an early childhood program is directly related to a teacher’s professional development.
Chapter III

The Project

The family involvement project that I created for SCCSD is a combination of activities that families will do at home with their child, opportunities at school to be involved, and family-school meetings that will educate the families on topics that pertain to their child’s education. This project has three goals:

- Goal one is to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of preschool aged children in the SCCSD preschool classrooms.
- Goal two is educate families on developmentally appropriate practices within the preschool classroom and to encourage families to work with their children.
- Goal three is to enhance the family involvement activities in other preschool classrooms in SCCSD.

The goals will be accomplished through teachers creating and implementing family involvement activities in their classroom and teachers attending a monthly professional development session on family involvement.

Preschool teachers in the SCCSD will participate in the monthly professional development. SCCSD has weekly professional development scheduled on Mondays of each week. The amount of professional development each week is 35 minutes, 60 minutes, or 90 minutes. The amount of time each week is pre-determined by the head of professional development for SCCSD. Family involvement professional development will be held the second Monday of each month during normal professional development hours. This will take place during the first year of implementing the family involvement project due to the time needed to
create activities that are meaningful and planning the family-school meetings to educate the families.

I will be leading the family involvement professional development with the assistance of the preschool director. All twelve SCCSD preschool teachers are expected to attend each professional development session. The preschool director of SCCSD does invite the thirty Preschool Initiative preschool teachers but most teachers do not attend due to schedule conflicts or because the professional development is during non-paid hours for the teachers.

The scheduled professional development sessions will be located at Irving Preschool Annex, since the preschool director is located there. Ten of the SCCSD preschool teachers will travel from their school site to Irving Preschool Annex. Equipment that will be used during the family involvement professional development will be laptop computers and a video projector with a white board. Each teacher will receive a three-ring binder at the first session, so he or she can store all the handouts from all ten professional development sessions. Also included in the binder will be a list of sources that helped in planning the professional development sessions.

Since each family involvement professional development session is either sixty or ninety minutes long, there will not be scheduled breaks.

In order to promote family involvement with all families, all information from the professional development sessions will be translated from English to Spanish. If teachers have documents that they want to send home that need it to be translated, then they will send their documents to the English Second Language (ESL) department for them to translate to Spanish. If translators are needed at family-school meetings, then teachers will need to contact the ESL department.

Session I
The first professional development session will focus on goal three, to enhance family involvement. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.1).

**Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda**

**8/20/12 Irving Preschool 3:30-5:00**

**Learning Targets for this PD:**

- Teachers will gain knowledge of SCCSD expectations of home visits.
- Teachers will plan two home visits in collaboration with another preschool teacher.

1. Fill out first column of K-W-L chart on family involvement.
2. Fill out chart on how to promote family involvement and effectiveness.
3. Overview of the family involvement project for this school year.
4. Home visits—with collaboration time to plan at least 2 home visits.
5. Fill out second column of K-W-L chart on family involvement.

Figure 3.1 *Session I Professional development agenda*

The session will begin with a large group discussion. Teachers will create a K-W-L chart (see Appendix A) of what they already know about family involvement. They will have enough time to complete the first column of the K-W-L chart. Once the first column is completed, the teachers will begin a discussion on what they currently do in their classroom to promote family involvement and the effectiveness of it. As each teacher is discussing how they promote family involvement in their classroom, a staff person will record their conversations.
The next part of the session will be an overview of the family involvement project that they will be implementing in their classrooms for the school year. They will be given a list of family involvement professional development sessions for the coming school year.

The final discussion area is home visits. Each teacher will receive a handout on SCCSD’s expectations of home visits and how a sample home visit should be conducted (see Appendix B). Each teacher will receive the Beginning Cards of the program Get Ready to Read (see Appendix C). Each teacher will have thirty minutes to collaborate with another teacher to create a home visit plan for at least two students in their classrooms. A copy of the home visit form and family questionnaire will be given to the teachers to use during home visits (see Appendix D).

At the end of the professional development session, the teachers will be asked to complete the second column of the K-W-L chart. They will write all the things that they want to know about family involvement or areas about which they have more questions. They will turn in the K-W-L chart by August 24, 2012.

Session II

The second professional development session will focus on goal two, to educate families. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.2).

Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda

9/10/12 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35

Learning Targets for this PD:
- Teachers will gain knowledge about family--school meetings and how to implement them
in their classroom.

- Teachers will collaborate together to create a family--school meeting on the subject of importance to play.

1. How to set up family--school meetings
2. How to choose topics of interests.
3. Where to find resources/speakers on the subject.
4. Creating a family--school meeting--the importance of play.

Figure 3.2 Session II Professional development agenda

The session will begin with a large group discussion about the handout on family-school meetings (see Appendix E). A brief overview will describe what a family-school meeting is. The group will create a list of potential topics for family--school meetings. There will be a discussion on how to individualize the list for their classrooms.

The next part of the discussion will refer back to the handout on family-school meetings, which will emphasize where to find resources and speakers on the potential topics. Any other resources mentioned during the discussion, will be added to the handout.

The final portion of this session will provide time for teachers collaborating together to create a family--school meeting on the topic of the importance of play. Teachers will be given handouts with resources to be shared with families (see Appendix F). Teachers will work in their home school pair, so they can choose to conduct the school-family meeting together. Teachers will implement the family--school meeting prior to the October 8, 2012 professional development.

Session III
The third professional development session will focus on goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of the preschool aged children in SCCSD and goal three, to enhance family involvement. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.3).

Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional

Development Agenda

10/8/12 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35

Learning Targets for this PD:

- Teachers will create 20 take home activities.
- Teachers will create a family--school meeting on take home activities and working with their children at home through take home activities.

1. Take home activities and how to implement them.
2. Time to create 20 take home activities.
3. Family--school meeting--Take home activities.

Figure 3.3 Session III Professional development agenda

The session will begin with a large group discussion about the handout on take home activities (see Appendix G). A brief overview will describe what take home activities are. A list of examples of how to implement them will be included on the handout.

The next part of the session will be a work time to create twenty take home activities (see Appendix H). All teachers will be given the same materials to create twenty simple, easy to make take home activities. The take home activities will be based on the GOLD standards from Creative Curriculum. Each activity will state the GOLD standard and have directions on how to
complete the activity, so families will have a better understanding of what their children are learning at school.

The last part of the session will be a handout on implementing the next family-school meeting on the topic of take home activities (see Appendix I). Teachers will implement the family-school meeting prior to the November 12, 2012, professional development.

Session IV

The fourth professional development session will focus on goal three, to enhance family involvement, and goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical and cognitive development of the students. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be in large group (see Figure 3.4).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda</th>
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<td>11/12/12 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35</td>
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Learning Targets for this PD:

- Teachers will gain knowledge about conferences and how to communicate with families effectively.
  1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
  2. Take home activity ideas.
  3. Ways to involve families in the classroom.
  4. Communication with families.
  5. Conference planning.

*Please bring 1-2 take home activity ideas to share with the group.

Figure 3.4 Session IV Professional development agenda
This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classroom this past month.

The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. A handout with examples on it will be given to the group (see Appendix K). Any other ideas generated through the discussion will be added to the list.

Communication with families’ handout (see Appendix L) will be given out. On the handout will be the expectations of SCCSD and ideas on how to communicate with families. Teachers will be given time to discuss any thoughts on the subject.

The final part of the session is about conference planning. A handout on SCCSD’s expectations of conferences will be handed out (see Appendix M).

Session V

The fifth professional development session will focus on goal three, to enhance family involvement, and goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of the preschool students. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.5).

| Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda |
Learning Targets for this PD:

- Teachers will plan 2 home visit plans in collaboration with another preschool teacher.
  1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
  2. Take home activity ideas.
  3. Ways to involve families in the classroom.
  4. Home visits--with collaboration time to plan at least 2 home visits.

*Please bring 1-2 take home activity ideas to share with the group

This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classroom this past month.

The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. In November the teachers received a handout on ways to involve families in their classroom (see Appendix K). Each month any ideas that are generated from the discussion will be added to the original handout.

The final discussion area is home visits. The handout on SCCSD’s expectations of home visits will be revisited (see Appendix B). Each teacher will receive the Making Progress Cards
of the program Get Ready to Read (see Appendix N). Each teacher will then have thirty minutes to collaborate with another teacher to create a home visit plan for at least two students in their classrooms.

Session VI

The sixth professional development session will focus on goal three, to enhance family involvement, and goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of the students. During this professional development session, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.6).

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<th>Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional</th>
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<tr>
<td>Development Agenda</td>
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<td>1/14/13 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35</td>
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**Learning Targets for this PD:**

- Teachers will create a family welcome area in their classrooms.
  1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
  2. Take home activity ideas.
  3. Ways to involve families in the classroom.
  4. Family welcome area.

*Please bring 1-2 take home activity ideas to share with the group.

Figure 3.6 Session VI Professional development agenda

This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classroom this past month.
The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. In November the teachers received a handout on ways to involve families in their classrooms (see Appendix K). Each month any ideas that are generated from the discussion will be added to the original handout.

The final part of the session is on the family welcome area. Each teacher will receive a handout on what a family welcome area is (see Appendix O). Teachers will work collaboratively with another teacher to create a family welcome area in their own classrooms. Teachers will be expected to have a family welcome area set up in their classrooms prior to the February 11, 2013, professional development.

Session VII

The seventh professional development session will focus on all three goals, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development in all preschool students; to educate families on developmentally appropriate practices; and to enhance family involvement. During this professional development, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.7).

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<thead>
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<th>Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/13/13 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35</td>
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<td>Learning Targets for this PD:</td>
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- Teachers will create a teaching philosophy and goals for students.
- Teachers will plan a family-school meeting on the topic of reading at home.
  1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
  2. Take home activity ideas.
  3. Family involvement ideas in the classroom.
  4. Family-school meeting--Reading at home.
  5. Family welcome booklet--creating a teacher philosophy and goals for students.
*Please bring 1-2 take home activity ideas to share with the group.

Figure 3.7 Session VII Professional development agenda

This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classrooms this past month.

The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. In November the teachers received a handout on ways to involve families in their classrooms (see Appendix K). Each month any ideas that are generated from the discussion will be added to the original handout.

The next part of this session will be a series of handouts on the topic of reading at home (see Appendix P). This family-school meeting was created in collaboration with the SCCSD
Title 1 teachers. The Title 1 teachers will attend the family-school meeting if invited and help run the meeting. Teachers will implement the family-school meeting prior to the March 11, 2013, professional development.

The final part of this session will be teachers collaborating together to create a family welcome booklet. The teachers will learn about a different piece of the family welcome booklet at each of the upcoming professional development sessions. The first portion of the family welcome booklet is the teacher's philosophy and goals for students. Teachers will receive a handout (see Appendix Q) on how to write a teaching philosophy and a written example.

Session VIII

The eighth professional development session will focus on goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development in all preschool students, and goal three, to enhance family involvement. During this professional development, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/12/13 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Targets for this PD:

- Teachers will create a teaching philosophy and goals for students.
  1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
  2. Take home activity ideas.
  3. Family involvement ideas in the classroom.
  5. Family welcome booklet—continue working on philosophy and goals for students portion.
This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classroom this past month.

The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. In November the teachers received a handout on ways to involve families in their classroom (see Appendix K). Each month any ideas that are generated from the discussion will be added to the original handout.

The next part of the session is a short discussion about conference planning. A handout on SCCSD’s expectations of conferences will be revisited (see Appendix M).

The final part of this session will be teachers collaborating together to create a family welcome booklet. This section will be a continuation of the February 11, 2013, professional development session. Teachers will continue to work on their teaching philosophy and goals for students section of the family welcome booklets. Teachers will create their own teaching philosophy for their family welcome booklet prior to the April 8, 2013, professional development.

Session IX
teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of the session is a short discussion on ways to involve families in the classroom. In November the teachers received a handout on ways to involve families in their classrooms (see Appendix K). Each month any ideas that are generated from the discussion will be added to the original handout.

The final part of this session will be teachers collaborating together to create a family welcome booklet. The teachers will create a section of the family welcome booklet at each of the upcoming professional development sessions. The second section of the family welcome booklet is describing the activities that children will have in their classrooms. Teachers will receive a handout (see Appendix R) on examples of how to write a description of activities for the family welcome booklet.

Session X

The tenth and final professional development session will focus on goal two, to educate families on developmentally appropriate practices, and goal one, to increase the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of all preschool students. During this professional development, all preschool teachers will be grouped in both large and small groups (see Figure 3.10).

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**Sioux City CSD Preschool Professional Development Agenda**

5/14/13 Irving Preschool 3:30-4:35

**Learning Targets for this PD:**

- Teachers will show an understanding of what they have learned on the subject of family
involvement.

- Teachers will plan a family--school meeting on the topic of summer plans.
- Teachers will create a section in the family welcome booklet about policies and procedures in the classroom.

1. Questions teachers may have still? Something that has gone well in your classroom?
2. Take home activity ideas.
3. Creating family--school meeting-summer plans.
4. Family welcome booklet--creating an area that describes policies and procedures in the classroom.
5. Fill out third column of K-W-L chart on family involvement.
6. Fill out PD evaluation.

*Please bring 1-2 take home activity ideas to share with the group.

Figure 3.10 Session X Professional development agenda

This session will begin with a large group discussion on any questions that the preschool teachers might still have about family involvement. Also each teacher will be given time to share one thing in the area of family involvement that has gone well for them in their classroom this past month.

The next part of the session is a short discussion on take home activities. On the agenda, teachers were asked to bring one or two take home activity ideas to share with the group. The teachers will also receive a new take home activity idea at each professional development session (see Appendix J).

The next part of this session will be a short discussion on the upcoming family-school meeting. Since each teacher has implemented three previous family-school meetings, they will
create their own meeting on the topic of summer plans. Teachers will implement the family-school meeting prior to the end of the school year.

The next part of this session will be teachers collaborating together to create a family welcome booklet. During the previous professional development sessions, the teachers created sections one and two. The third and final section of the family welcome booklet is describing the policies and procedures of the classrooms. Teachers will receive a handout (see Appendix S) on examples of how to write the policies and procedures of the family welcome booklet.

At the end of the professional development session, the teachers will be asked to complete the third column of the K-W-L chart (see Appendix A) that they started in August. They will write all the things that they have learned over this past year. Teachers will also be given a final evaluation form to be filled out and returned to myself by May 25, 2013. The evaluation will ask the teachers to reflect on the ten professional development sessions that were about family involvement. The teachers will also have a chance to suggest ideas for improving the past ten family involvement sessions.

Summary

This chapter focused on the family involvement project. The project implemented researched based activities and changes to the SCCSD preschool classrooms. Professional development was given to the preschool teachers in ten sessions throughout the school year. Through professional development, teachers were trained to implement weekly take home activities, family-school meetings, creating a family welcome area, and creating a family welcome booklet.
Chapter IV
Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The purpose of this family involvement project was to provide professional development to preschool teachers in the SCCSD. Through professional development, the teachers implemented family involvement activities in their classrooms to achieve the three goals of this project. A literature review of research of family involvement was done in Chapter II. The research gave me insight on benefits of family involvement; family involvement and socio-economical factors; family involvement activities; barriers to family involvement; and professional development with family involvement. Chapter III outlined the family involvement project that included a year of professional development and implementation of activities in the SCCSD preschool classrooms.

Insights Gained From Project

Before beginning this project, I have always implemented family involvement activities in my classroom. I have always strongly believed that family involvement was important and felt that students who experienced more parent involvement in the classroom made gains faster in all areas of development compared to students whose parents were not involved in the classroom. After reading studies and books on family involvement, I reaffirmed my belief that having families involved correlates positively to my students’ success.

A new insight that I received after reading multiple studies was changing the term from parent to families. I have always included other people in my classroom, such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents, but have never thought of the actual term parent. Keyser (2006) wrote that the term parent has changed over the years and now family means “significant people who care for the child: aunts, uncles, grandparents, foster parents, neighbors, adoptive parents, friends and
parents” (p. xii). In order for each student to have someone there representing them in the
classroom or at home, teachers should be using the word family instead of parent.

**Recommendations**

All schools should require teachers to implement family involvement. Schools should create policies and procedures for family involvement so teachers have guidelines on how to implement it in their classroom. “When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more” (Henderson et al., 2007. p. 2).

Based on the research I have read and the experiences I have had with my students and their families, I would recommend implementing a family involvement program in all classrooms, but most importantly in preschool classrooms. A project like the one I created can be implemented in almost all preschool classrooms. “If constructed and implemented well, parent involvement programs can provide the linkage between home, community, and the school that is essential to the healthy growth and development of children” (Comer & Haynes, 1991. p. 227).

When planning family involvement activities in the classroom, teachers should have a variety of activities planned throughout the year. When inviting families in the classroom, the time of the activities should vary so that all families have the opportunity to be involved. Asking families for their work schedules will help when planning the school activities, so all families can attend.

**Future Projects and or Research**

After completing this family involvement project in the SCCSD preschool classrooms, a potential research study would be to determine whether the SCCSD preschool students had
higher academic growth in GOLD scores compared to the Preschool Initiative classrooms, which do not formally implement a family involvement program. My plan would be to continue the SCCSD family involvement program in the upcoming 2012-2013 school year and track GOLD scores each scoring period, fall; winter; and spring. All of the students in this study would be three and four years old and some of them would be on IEPs. After the final scoring period, I would look at classroom growth and individual growth in all GOLD areas.

The next step would be to expand the project into the Preschool Initiative classrooms. Since their classroom teachers do not attend professional development with SCCSD on a weekly basis, the professional development sessions would need to be modified to meet the needs of each classroom.

**Educational Policies**

From completing this family involvement project and implementing monthly professional development with the preschool teaching staff in SCCSD, a new policy for the SCCSD would be continuing to have one Monday of professional development on the topic of family involvement. In order for teachers to implement change in their classrooms, they require extensive, on-going training. From completing the series of monthly professional development sessions on family involvement, the teachers of the SCCSD implemented the activities. The teachers were given the time to learn the expectations of the project and time to collaborate with other teachers to implement the activities.

Another policy change would be a family involvement fund set aside for each classroom to use for implementing activities throughout the year. The money used to support the family involvement fund would come from fundraising efforts in the preschool department. The fund would be around $100.00 per classroom. In order to use the fund, teachers would need to submit
a request to the Preschool Director explaining the need for the money and how it would benefit
the families. The Preschool Director would either approve or deny any requests.

Teacher Practices of Self and Others

The most important conclusion from this project is that family involvement does affect
the overall growth of the students in my classroom. It is my job to work for all families to be
involved in my classroom, either by coming to monthly activities, coming to school meetings, or
just working with their child at home. I have to be willing to try multiple ways to involve
families in my classroom. In order to do that, I have to continue to create varied opportunities to
meet all families at their comfort level.

A second conclusion included the value of being a reflective teacher and going through
the process of creating and implementing the professional development portion of the project.
Doing this project gave me an insight into the world of administration. I had to create agendas,
handouts, new policies and procedures, and run professional development for the SCCSD. From
doing this, I have found that I do enjoy being on both sides of education, being a teacher and an
administrator.

Family involvement has been a passion of mine for the past four years. After writing this
paper, I have a new enthusiasm for family involvement in my classroom. I have always seen the
benefits of family involvement in my own classroom with my students whose parents were
involved, but now I have the research to back up my beliefs.
References


Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc.


Meeting of kindergarten registration, SCCSD.


Appendix A

K-W-L Chart

What I know about family involvement:

What I want to learn about family involvement:

What I have learned about family involvement:

Thoughts on activities that I have implemented in my classroom over the past year
Appendix B

SCCSD Home Visit Expectations

Steps for making a home visit:

1. Arrange a home visit that is convenient for the family. Home visits are typically done Monday through Friday starting at 9:00 and ending at 3:00. If a family needs a home visit after those hours, then teachers will need approval from principals so assistants can change their hours according to the need of the classroom.

2. Begin the home visit by asking parents to talk about their children’s skills, talents and interests. When completing the family questionnaire, the teacher will interview the family and write the responses.

3. Talk about skills that the children will be learning at school, so the families can help reinforce those skills at home.

4. When filling out the home visit form, remember to talk about the family goal that they have for their child. This goal is something that the families would like their child to accomplish by fall conferences (August home visit) and spring conferences (January home visit).

5. Introduce short, simple learning activities that they can do at home. For example, cooking with their children, having conversations, and playing board games as a family.

6. Show the families how to work with their child and if possible observe the family interacting with the child. Leave the activity behind so the families can use it in the future.

Sample first home visit:

1. Hand the families the SCCSD preschool handbook and go through the important areas that pertain to the overview of preschool. During the section that describes the Creative Curriculum and the GOLD assessment, talk about specific skills that the children will be learning in the first months of school.

2. Complete the family questionnaire by interviewing the family and writing the responses. Try to have a discussion with the family to learn more information about how they function as a group, what types of things they do together with their child, and possible ways for the family to be involved in the classroom.

3. Hand the parents the sheet “How can I help my child succeed in school.” Read the sheet and go through each line item talking about the importance of it and how it relates to preschool. Explain to the family that they will be given multiple opportunities to do activities with their child either at home or at school.

4. Complete the activity “My name has letters” with the child as the family observes. When the activity is completed, leave it so the family can use it again in the future. If the activity has materials that are needed for the classroom, then ask the family to return the activity on the first day of school or materials could be purchased through a family involvement fund.

Appendix C
Get Ready to Read Beginning Cards

Get Ready to Read!

Print Knowledge

What You Need:
- paper
- glue stick
- pictures of food cut out from magazines
- crayons or markers
- name cards of different foods clearly written on index cards

What You Do:
1. Discuss with your child the purpose and use of a menu.
2. Choose a meal or pretend meal for your child to put on the menu.
3. Lay out the pictures of food.
4. Have your child pick out a few pictures. Discuss good choices and favorites.
5. Write "MEAL" at the top of the paper. Help your child, if he or she is ready, write the word on his or her own.
6. Have your child glue the pictures of the selected foods down the left side of the paper.
7. Help your child find the names of the selected foods on the cards. They can either glue them in the food or copy it directly onto the paper.
8. Your child can read the menu back to you or share it with a sibling or friend.

Why?
Your child becomes familiar with one of the many functions of print.

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Get Ready to Read!

My Favorite Book

Print Knowledge

What You Need:
- construction paper
- pictures cut from magazines and newspapers
- markers
- glue
- stapler

What You Do:
1. Fold two sheets of construction paper and staple them along the creases to make a book.
2. Have your child pick a title for the book, such as "My Favorite Toys," "My Favorite Animals" or "My Favorite Foods." Write the title and your child's name on the front of the book.
3. Help your child pick pictures that have to do with the chosen title and glue them inside the book.
4. Encourage your child to share his or her book with a sibling or friend.

Why?
Your child learns that pictures and print carry messages and have many uses. Your child also learns about how books work.

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Get Ready to Read! My Name Has Letters

Print Knowledge

What You Need:
- plastic 3-D letters
- paper
- markers
- shallow basket

What You Do
1. Using the plastic letters, spell the child's name on the paper.
2. Trace the letters with the marker so that the child's name is written on the paper. Color in the letters all the same color.
3. Place the plastic letters that are in the child's name in the shallow basket.
4. Have the child pick letters from the basket and match them, one by one, to the corresponding letters on the paper. Continue until the child's name is spelled.

Why?
The child learns that his or her name is made up of letters and what those letters look like.

Get Ready to Read! The Reading Puppet

Print Knowledge

What You Need:
- puppet or stuffed animal
- picture book

What You Do
1. Place the book upside-down where you and your child can see it.
2. Bring out the puppet and introduce it to your child. Explain that the puppet is going to read the book, but will need some help. Encourage your child to interact with the puppet.
3. Begin the activity by having the puppet look for the title, author, and illustrator of the book. Since the book is upside-down, the puppet should ask for help from your child. For example, "I want to read this book, but first I need to tell you the title. I can't find it! The book is upside-down. There's the title. What does 'title' mean?"
4. Continue the activity with the puppet asking for your child's help reading the book. For example: "What should I do first if I want to read the book?" "Where should I start reading?" "Help me turn the page." "Can you help me find the picture of ______?"

Why?
The child learns about how books work.
Get Ready to Read!  Draw to the Music

Emergent Writing

What You Need:
- music with different styles and tempos
- paper
- crayons

What You Do:
1. Give your child paper and crayons. You can use construction paper or tape large mural paper on the wall or floor.
2. Tell your child to draw when the music is on and stop drawing when the music is off.
3. Turn on the music.
4. Let your child draw for a few minutes. Turn the music off and remind your child to stop drawing.
5. Repeat several times, changing the music after a few minutes to a different style or tempo.

Why?
Your child learns to connect arm and hand movements with the music. He or she makes on paper. Your child also practices controlling a crayon.

Get Ready to Read!  Draw Your Day

Emergent Writing

What You Need:
- a variety of drawing materials (crayons, markers, pencils)
- paper

What You Do:
1. As your child watches you, write at the top of the paper, "Today in school, I will..." or "Today at home, I will..."
2. Ask your child to finish the sentence with a drawing of something that will happen that day in school or at home. You can write your child's description of the drawing at the bottom of the page.

Why?
Your child learns that drawing a picture can tell a story or describe an event.
Get Ready to Read! I Can Write Letters!

Emergent Writing

What You Need:
- sandpaper
- baking sheet with sand spread out on it
- large squares of carpet

What You Do:
1. Stand side by side with your child.
2. With your index finger, "write" the letter that you would like to practice in the air in front of you. This should be done in a large and exaggerated way. Say the name of the letter out loud as you "write" it in the air. Do this several times along with your child.
3. Encourage your child to experiment with "writing" the letter with his or her index finger on sandpaper, in sand on a baking sheet, and on carpet. Encourage all of your child's attempts and help him or her as necessary.

Why?
Your child will practice the muscle movements involved in writing letter shapes, which will help him or her to learn how to write letters.

Get Ready to Read! Tell About Your Picture

Emergent Writing

What You Need:
- drawing paper
- crayons
- black marker

What You Do:
1. Give your child drawing paper and crayons. Tell your child to draw a picture of an activity that he or she has done recently. For example, the drawing can be about something your child did in school, at home or with a friend.
2. Ask your child to describe to you what he or she has drawn. Write, in clear print with the black marker, what your child says on the picture. Be sure to read the description out loud to your child after it is written.

Why?
Your child learns that pictures and words can be used to describe experiences.
Get Ready to Read! Walk on a Letter

**Emergent Writing**

**Objective:** Identifying letters

**What You Need:**
- masking tape

**What You Do:**
1. Make a large letter on the floor with the masking tape.
2. Talk with your child about the name of the letter and a word that begins with that letter.
3. Have your child walk or jump on the masking tape in the shape of the letter. He or she can say the name of the letter while walking or jumping.
4. Help your child think of a few other words that start with the letter.

**Why?**
Your child becomes familiar with the names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet.

---

Get Ready to Read! Be an Expert Listener

**Linguistic Awareness**

**Objective:** Identifying sounds

**What You Need:**
- cassette tape with common sounds recorded on it
- cassette tape player

**What You Do:**
1. Introduce the activity by talking to your child about the different sounds that are heard in the house and around the neighborhood. Help your child think of a few sounds and discuss them.
2. Encourage your child to close his or her eyes and listen carefully to the sounds that are heard. Talk about the sounds with your child.
3. Try this activity with sounds recorded on a cassette tape or on a "listening walk" outside.

**Why?**
Your child learns to listen carefully for sounds. This helps him or her to be a more active listener to the sounds in language.
Get Ready to Read!  Find the Rhymes

Linguistic Awareness

What You Need:
- pictures of rhyming word pairs

What You Do:
1. Begin with any two pairs of pictures displaying rhyming words.
2. Spread the pictures out on the table or floor.
3. Explain to your child that words that rhyme and with the same sounds. Give a few examples, such as rabbit or shouting.
4. Let your child choose one of the pictures. Find the picture that rhymes with the chosen picture and ask your child to determine if the words rhyme. Say the words together to emphasize the rhyming parts of the words. Do the same with the other rhyming pair.
5. Spread out more pictures and have your child find the rhyming pairs.

Why?
Your child begins to recognize that some words rhyme because they share common sounds.

Get Ready to Read!  How Many Words?

Linguistic Awareness

What You Need:
- several plastic counters (buttons, paperclips, etc.) or other small game pieces

What You Do:
1. Give your child a pair of counters. Tell your child that sentences are made up of words, and that you are going to help him or her count the words in some sentences.
2. Say a simple sentence such as, "I have three books."
3. Help your child put down a counter for each word in the sentence.
4. Say the sentence again, having your child touch a counter for each word that is heard.
5. Continue with a few different sentences, using longer sentences when your child is ready.

Why?
Your child learns that sentences are made up of words. He or she also practices counting for small segments of language.
Linguistic Awareness

One-to-One

What You Need:
- 8-10 empty black film canisters with tops
- noisemakers e.g., salt, beads, water, rice, metal keys, chalk, pebbles

What You Do:
1. Fill two canisters with the same item, e.g., a key. Do this for a total of eight canisters (four pairs).
2. Model the activity for your child: Shake one canister and describe what it sounds like. Shake another canister and describe it.
3. Repeat until you find two canisters that make the same sound. Describe the sound to your child.
4. Ask your child to try the activity. Encourage him or her to describe what is heard as the canisters are shaken.

Why?
Your child will learn to listen carefully for sounds. This will help your child to be a more active listener to the sounds in language.
Appendix D

Family Questionnaire

Child's name__________________ Parent's names__________________

1. What languages are spoken in your home?

2. Name and ages of family members in the home:

3. What are your family's traditions? What activities do you do as a family? How do you celebrate birthdays and other important family events?

4. What are some ways you would like to be involved with the preschool?

5. Where do you work? What are your typical work hours?

6. What are your family's hobbies, skills, talents, and interests?

7. What would you like us to know about your child? What are his/her interests?

8. What is your child's greatest strength?

9. What games has your child played at home? (Candyland, Go Fish) What is his/her favorite game?

10. Do you own a computer? How often does your child use it? What type of activities does your child do on the computer?

11. What type of community experiences has your child had? (zoo, parks, museum, circus)

12. What else do you want me to know about your child?


Appendix D

Preschool Home Visit Form

Date: _______________________

Name of child: ____________________________________________

Visit participants: __________________________________________

Information to be shared: ___________________________________

Planned activity: ____________________________________________

Family goal for child: ________________________________________

Family observations of child at home: __________________________

__________________________________________________________

Staff reminders: ____________________________________________

Family member’s signature

__________________________________________________________
Appendix E

SCCSD Family--School Meetings Expectations

1. Family--school meetings will occur either during the school day, after school, or at night depending on the need of your families. If it occurs during the day, then your students will need to be out of the classroom so the meeting can be effective.

Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies (2007) wrote that family--school meetings “allow for teachers and parents to learn from each other.”

Example of what a family-school meeting looks like

1. Announce the topic of the family--school meeting several weeks in advance so families know what to expect.
2. Have the handouts available to families before the meeting so they have time to read and reflect on the topic before they come to the meeting. Have the handouts available at the meeting so in case the families did not bring them to the meeting.
3. Take notes throughout the meeting so that families that we unable to attend can have a record of what happened at the meeting.

Where to find resources/speakers for family-school meetings

- Pinterest-Has a lot of resources that you can search for and see what other teachers have done.
- Northwest Area Education Agency-lots of experts that are willing to talk about any subject that a classroom might have. They also have free handouts that are available to families. There are also support groups for families that have children with Autism, Down syndrome, and ADHD.
- Westside Resource Center-A family-friendly location for parents living in Sioux City to receive resource and referral information, parent support and research-based parent education. Parent education classes are taught individually in a family's home or at the center based on need. Parents receive a certificate upon completion of a curriculum (approximately six sessions) and incentives can be earned. Individual and group classes are also offered in Spanish and a translator is available to assist Spanish-speaking families. For more information contact: Monica Rosenthal (712) 255-4321.


Pelo, A. (2002). From borders to bridges: Transforming our relationships with parents. Child Care Information Exchange
Appendix F
Importance of Play Handout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Children do this:</th>
<th>They are learning to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Put blocks in trucks and dump them out</td>
<td>Understand size, weight, and number concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use blocks and wooden animals to create a zoo</td>
<td>Recreate the world around them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance one large block on top of another</td>
<td>Control and coordinate muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on dress-up clothes</td>
<td>Use their small muscle skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate cups and plates at clean-up time</td>
<td>Group objects in categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put pegs in a pegboard</td>
<td>Coordinate the actions of the eyes and hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort pictures that are the same</td>
<td>Match and classify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make playdough</td>
<td>Recognize how materials change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw a picture of a person</td>
<td>Use symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribble on paper</td>
<td>Use writing as a means of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch and throw balls</td>
<td>Coordinate eye and hand movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play beside other children</td>
<td>Get along with others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) wrote “When they engage in mature socio-dramatic play (pretend play that involves communication with other children), children’s interactions last longer than they do in other situations, children show high levels of involvement, large numbers of children are drawn in, and children show more cooperation” (p. 131).

Dodge, Heroman, Colker, & Bickart (2010) wrote that “through play, children explore mathematical ideas and construct literacy understandings. They develop understandings about science and technology concepts and learn fundamental process and inquiry skills. Play is also an important avenue for learning in social studies and the arts” (p. 6).


10 WAYS TO PLAY IN SEPTEMBER

1. Have a mystery food taste test.
   A grown-up can offer you some foods to try with your eyes closed. Can you guess the mystery foods?

2. Start (or add to) a collection.
   Rocks, buttons, stamps, coins, & beads are a few ideas to get you started. Try sorting your collection different ways, too.

3. Rip and tear colorful paper into pieces.
   Use the pieces to make a collage. You could glue the pieces or stick them to clear Contact paper.

4. Make something with an egg carton.

5. Make your own snack mix.
   Set out bowls of crackers, cereal, dried fruit, pretzels, etc. and create a custom snack mix.

6. Play "repeat my rhythm."
   Take turns creating rhythm patterns with claps, stomps, taps, clicks, or any other sound you can make. Can everyone follow along with your rhythm?

7. Draw a tree that is in your yard or neighborhood.

8. Sleep in a different bed or room than you usually do.

9. How far can you jump?
   Mark a starting line (tape or chalk), then jump as far as you can and mark it, too. Measure your long jump with a tape measure. Try again!

10. Set-up a pretend museum.
   Your displays might include artwork, toys, or "artifacts" from around your house. Be creative and let your child give you the full tour!

HAPPY PLAYING!

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Appendix G

SCCSD Take Home Bag Expectations

Epstein (2007b) wrote “parents need concrete and feasible suggestions about what behaviors and activities they can use with their children at home to consolidate and extend the learning taking place in the classroom” (p. 20).

1. Take home activity bags will be implemented in all integrated preschool classrooms on October 18, 2011.
2. They will be sent home weekly on Tuesdays and returned by Friday. This is the schedule unless there is a short week or holidays. Or if you choose, you may create your own schedule.
3. All parents will receive a note explaining the take home bags and allowing them to opt out of receiving the bags.
4. The teacher or assistants will be responsible for choosing the activities and documenting which student has what activity. Documentation can be done through an Excel document or handwritten. Be mindful of how activities are chosen, this is an excellent way to individualize the GOLD data.
5. There will be times when materials will be ruined or lost, but do not let that discourage you from continuing on with the bags.
6. At this initial professional development session, each teacher will make 20 take home activities. You may create more if you so wish. There will be time set aside at future professional developments for you to receive more activities.

Take Home Bag Information

Dear Parents,

Your child has the privilege to enjoy this take home bag and all its activities with you. Take home bags go home on Tuesday afternoon and MUST be returned to school on Friday morning.

During the time the bag is at your home, you are encouraged to do the activities with your child. My hope is that these bags will allow your child to share what they are learning at school with you at home.

Please, make sure that all materials are returned, in good shape, in the bag Friday morning. If a child does not return the bag on time, or loses materials from the bag, he or she will not be allowed to take a bag home for one month or longer, depending on the situation.

Enjoy the opportunity to share some fun activities with your child and find out some of the things that they are learning at school.

I choose not to have take home bags for my child.

Thank you,
Mrs. Barrett
Appendix H

20 Ready to Make Take Home Activities

1. Cutting take home bag
   a. GOLD 7.a Uses fingers hands
   b. Materials: Scissors and 3 cutting sheets
   c. Directions: Children will cut on the lines with the scissors provided. Please send the cutting sheets back in the bag.
2. Go Fish memory card game
   a. GOLD: 3a-Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations - 
      Balances needs and rights of self and others.
   b. Materials: One deck of Go Fish cards.
   c. Directions: Spread the cards out facing down. The youngest goes first. Players take 
      turn turning over any two cards to find matches. If there are no matches, they turn 
      them back over. If there are matches, they keep the cards. The next player goes. 
      The game ends when all the cards are matched.
3. Cover up math game
   a. GOLD: 3a-Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations-Balances needs and rights of self and others. 20a-Uses number concepts and operations-Counts.
   b. Materials: Cover up game boards (one per person), a die, and tokens.
   c. Directions: Players each take one board. The oldest player will go first. Players take turn rolling the die and count the number of dots on the die. Players place that many tokens on their board. The game ends when every space on one board is covered.
4. Teddy bear picnic game
   a. GOLD: 3a-Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations-
      Balances needs and rights of self and others.
   b. Materials: 1 game laminated game board, 3 bears, 1 colored die (with red, green and
      yellow dots)
   c. Directions: Players will place their bear at the starting space. The youngest player
      goes first. The first player rolls the die and looks at the color on the top of the die.
      The player moves the matching colored bear one space. Then it’s the next’s player
      turn. The game ends when all the bears have made it to the picnic.
5. **Match uppercase letters A-Z**
   a. **GOLD: 16a**—Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet-Identifies and names letters.
   b. **Materials:** 52 laminated uppercase letters A-Z cards.
   c. **Directions:** Place the cards face down. The oldest player goes first by turning over two cards. If they match, the player keeps the cards. If not, then turn over and next player goes. The game is over when all the cards are gone.

6. **Sticker sorting**
   a. **GOLD: 13**—Uses classification skills.
   b. **Materials:** 20 cards with different colored stickers placed on them.
   c. **Directions:** Have your child sort the stickers by color and size of the stickers. When they are done sorting, have them describe how they sorted the stickers.

7. **Sticker counting**
   a. **GOLD: 20abc**—Uses number concepts and operations—Counts, Quantifies, Connects numerals with their quantities.
   b. **Materials:** Laminated cards with sets of stickers on cards 1-20.
   c. **Directions:** On one side of the card there are stickers in sets. The children will count the stickers and state the number on the card. They will check if are correct by turning over the card to see the written number.

8. **Interview**
a. GOLD: 29-Demonstrates knowledge about self. 30-Show basic understanding of people and how they live.
b. Materials: Get the scoop reporting page, family letter, microphone, and crayons.
c. Directions: Interview your child using the get the scoop reporting page. Write down the answers and return it back to school when completed.

Dear Families,

Welcome to our Interview Bag!! As new members in our school family, we want to find out more about each other. Encloses are some items to use to “get the scoop” on your child! Find a quiet place to interview using the “Get the Scoop” page, and then return your findings so we can share them. We want all families to have the chance to participate, so please return the bag the next day so we can meet our “deadline” to have every member of our school family interviewed within a month! Thanks for your help.

Happy Reporting,

Mrs. Barrett

Interview Bag Items:

“Get the Scoop” Reporting Page
Microphone
Crayons

** If something is missing, please drop in a note so we can replace it for the next family.

Extra Extra!

Get the scoop on

Favorite color:
Favorite food:
Favorite things to do:
Favorite book:
Favorite candy:
Favorite movie:
Favorite toy:
Family members:
Pet family members:
9. Family November
   a. GOLD: 29-Demonstrates knowledge about self. 30-Show basic understanding of people and how they live. 9-Uses language to express thoughts and needs. 10-Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills.
   b. Materials: We are thankful paper, family book, family letter, and crayons.
   c. Directions: Read the assigned paper, have a discussion about what your child is thankful for. Then write all the things that the family is thankful for on the thankful paper.

Dear Families,

November is the “official” time to celebrate our thankfulness (even though we’re thankful all the time!) We talk often in our school family about why we’re thankful. Now we want to know why our home families are thankful! Please read __________, then share together all the things your family is thankful for. Write and illustrate about those things in our “We’re Thankful…” book. Please return the bag tomorrow so each family gets a turn before our Thanksgiving break. Your child will have a chance to share our page before we send it off to the next family. When the book is complete, it will go into our “Home Families Books” bin in our Reading Area for our school family to read (and reread and reread…). We are thankful for your support!!

Included in the We’re Thankful Bag:

We Are Thankful Paper

Crayons

* If anything is missing, please drop in a note so we can replace it for the next family – Thank you!

We Are Thankful!!

My Name is ___________________

I am thankful for:

10. Patterning
   a. GOLD: GOLD 23-Deomonstrates knowledge of patterns.
   b. Materials: 20 small plastic animals
   c. Directions: Patterns are items that repeat themselves over and over again. For example, red cat, blue cat, red cat, and blue cat (AB pattern). Have your child first start by copying a pattern that you make. If they are successful, have them create their own pattern. Next you can start a pattern and then have them complete your pattern. If you want to challenge your child, have them create other types of patterns other than AB. For example, they could create an AAB, ABC, and so on.

11. Which is higher?
   a. GOLD: 20abc-Uses number concepts and operations-Counts, quantify, and connect numerals with their quantities.
c. Directions: Have your child roll the dice. See if your child can first, tell you what both numbers are, and second, which one is bigger. If this was easy for your child, continue with which number is lower.

12. Matching numbers
   a. GOLD: 20c-Uses number concepts and operations-Counts, quantify, and connect numerals with their quantities. 13-Uses classification skills.
   b. Materials: Deck of cards
   c. Directions: Have your child match all the numbers into piles (All 1’s, 2’s, etc).

13. Preschool war
   a. GOLD: 20c-Uses number concepts and operations- connect numerals with their quantities.
   b. Materials: Deck of cards with the numbers 1-9.
   c. Directions: Shuffle the cards and divide into two piles. Both players get a pile of cards. They each turn a card over from the top of their deck at the same time. The highest card wins both cards. The player with the most cards at the end wins.

14. One to one matching
   a. GOLD: 20abc-Uses number concepts and operations-Counts, quantify, and connect numerals with their quantities.
   b. Materials: Numeral cards 1-10 and counters.
   c. Directions: Take a number card and place the counters next to the card. For example: If the card is 5, the child should count 5 counters and place it next to the card.

15. Name bag
   a. GOLD: 19a-Demonstrates emergent writing skills-Writes name.
   b. Materials: Family letter, name games/name songs papers, letter tiles, paper, and crayons.
   c. Directions: Read the family letter and complete the activities listed in the letter.

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Name Bag! Names are so important to our school family in so many ways, but did you know they are also an excellent tool for teaching literacy skills? There’s nothing more meaningful to a child than his/her name. Meaningful learning is long-term learning. In this bag are materials with ideas and activities to help you experience this meaningful learning at home. Thanks for your help.

Happy Learning,

Mrs. Barrett

Included in the Name Game Bag:

Name Games/ Name Songs
Letter Tiles
Paper
Strips of Paper
Crayons

What's in a Name?

Hickety Pickety Bumblebee,
can you say your name for me?

* Say it, clap it, tap it, shout it, whisper it, etc.

Growl your name, howl your name,
stretch it till it's long!

Chant your name, pant your name,
sing it like a song.

Clap your name, snap your name,
say it loud and clear.

Spell your name, yell your name,
tell the world you're here!

Names are short, names are long.

Say your name and clap along!

There's someone in our family
that we all love,
and _____ is his/her name—ol
(Spell his/her name 3x)
and _____ is his/her name—ol

**Use these songs to start your activities**

1. Use the attached sheet to sing some of our name songs. Use your child's name first, then use our other school family member's names. Don't forget to use your home family's names!

2. Use the included letter tiles to make the names of our school family members. Make your home family's name. Make your favorite book character's names.

3. Use your home family's names or choose 3 other names from our school family. Write all the names on a sheet of paper—compare them. Which is longest/shortest, which has similar letters, etc.?

4. Write down names on strips of paper. Cut the letters apart, scramble them, then challenge yourself to put them back together again!

5. Look at all the letters in your name—brainstorm 3 other things that start with each letter. Try other names too!

16. A apple puzzle

a. GOLD: 11bc—Demonstrates positive approaches to learning—persists and solves problems.

b. Materials: Completed apple puzzle, scissors, and apple puzzle.

c. Directions: Your child will color the apple puzzle sheet and then cut on the black lines. They will then attempt to put the puzzle back together. After putting the puzzle together for a few times, glue the puzzle together on a sheet of paper.
17. Upper to lower case match
   a. GOLD: 16a-Deomonstrates knowledge of the alphabet-Identifies and names letters.
   c. Directions: Place the 52 cards face down. Turn two cards over trying to find the upper to lower case match for each letter. If a match is found, you keep the card, if not turn the cards back over. The game is over when all the matches have been found.

18. Jeep puzzle
   a. GOLD: 11bc-Demonstrates positive approaches to learning-persists and solves problems.
   b. Materials: Completed jeep puzzle, scissors, and jeep puzzle.
   c. Directions: Your child will color the jeep puzzle sheet and then cut on the black lines. They will then attempt to put the puzzle back together. After putting the puzzle together for a few times, glue the puzzle together on a sheet of paper.
19. Making a menu
   a. GOLD: 19b-Demonstrates emergent writing skills-Writes to convey meaning.
   c. Directions: Discuss with your child the purpose and use of a menu. Choose a real or pretend meal for your child to put on the menu. Lay out the pictures of food. Have your child pick out a few pictures. Help your child, if he or she is ready; write the word on his or her own. Write “menu” at the top of the paper. Help your child, if he or she is ready, write the on his or her own. Have your child glue the pictures of the selected foods down the left side of the paper. Help your child write the names of the food on the right side of the paper.
20. My favorite book
   a. GOLD: 29-Demonstrates knowledge about self.
   c. Directions: Fold 2 sheets of paper and staple them together to make a book. Have your child pick a title for the book, such as "My favorite animals/toys/foods." Help your child pick pictures from the magazines that go along with the book your child choose to make.
Appendix I

Family--School Meeting on Take Home Activities

1. Introduce the families to the take home activity bag that will start going home with their children weekly.

2. Explain to the families the importance of completing the activities that you send home weekly. If the families complete the activities, it will help them progress on the GOLD assessment as the activities are based on what skills their child needs to work on.

3. Show some examples of what the activities are. If their children are with them, then pass out one activity per family and give them time to complete the activity together. Ask for feedback on the activities.
Appendix J

Take Home Activities--7 Ready to Make Activities

1. My name has letters
   a. GOLD: 19a-Demonstrates emergent writing skills-Writes name.
   c. Directions: Using the plastic letters, spell the child’s name on the paper. Trace the letters with a pencil, color in the letters with crayons. Place the letters on the table and have your child try to match the letters up with their name.

2. Name memory
   a. GOLD: 16a-Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet-Identifies and names letters.
   c. Directions: Using only the letters in your child’s name, write each letter on two cards. Shuffle the cards and spread them out face down. Ask your child to turn over any two cards. If the cards match, help the child name the letter and keep the cards. If the cards do not match, then turn the cards back over and try again. Play continues all matches have been made. Help your child put the letters in order to spell his or her name.

3. Draw your day
   a. GOLD: 14a-Uses symbols and images to represent something not present-Thinks symbolically.
   c. Directions: As your child watches you, write at the top of the paper, “Today in school I” or “Today at home, we will.” Ask your child to finish the sentence with a drawing of something that will happen that day in school or at home. You can write your child’s description of the drawing at the bottom of the page.

4. Tell about your picture
   a. GOLD: 14a-Uses symbols and images to represent something not present-Thinks symbolically.
   c. Directions: Give your child drawing paper and crayons. Tell your child to draw a picture of an activity that he or she has done recently. For example, the drawing can be something your child did in school, at home or with a friend. Ask your child to describe to you what he or she has drawn. Write what your child says about the picture.

5. Rhyme out
   a. GOLD: 15a-Demonstrates phonological awareness-Notices and discriminates rhyme.
   b. Materials: none
   c. Directions: Give your child some examples of words that rhyme. Then start with a simple word with many rhyming possibilities (hat, tall, sing, bell). Take turns saying a word that rhymes with the first word until you run out of rhymes. If you can, make a list of the rhyming words on paper as they are said.
6. Trace your name
   a. GOLD: 19a-Demonstrates emergent writing skills-Writes name.
   b. Materials: marker, paper, and chalk
   c. Directions: With the marker, write your child’s name in large letters on the paper.
      First ask your child to use a finger to trace each letter of his or her name on the paper. Help your child say the name of each letter out loud as it is traced. Give chalk to your child, and have him or her trace the letters with chalk, saying the name of each letter out loud as it is traced. If necessary, begin by holding and guiding your child’s hand as he or she holds the chalk.

7. Pick a letter
   a. GOLD: 16a-Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet-Identifies and names letters.
   c. Directions: Place 10 plastic letters in the bag. Model the activity by closing your eyes and picking a letter. As you feel the letter, describe what letter you think you’ve picked. Open your eyes and confirm your answer with your child. Have your child close his or her eyes and pick out a letter. Ask your child, what letter do you think it is? If the child is having trouble identifying the letter, give clues.
Appendix K

Ways to Involve Families in the Classroom

Dodge, Heroman, Colker, & Bickart (2010a) created a list of ways to involve families:

- **Sending things from home:** Families can help collect items for the art area (fabric scraps, buttons, stickers), items to use for sorting and classifying (bottle caps, playing cards, keys), or items for the dramatic play area.

- **Sharing their culture:** Invite families to cook a traditional dish with the children (or bring it to school), teach the students dances or songs, or share photographs. If families are unable to come to school, then they could video tape them reading a story or singing a song.

- **Sharing a talent or job:** It could be anything from a family member playing an instrument to teaching children about gardening.

- **Participating in a study:** Send home a note about the upcoming study and invite the families to be part of the planning and learning process. This could be a field trip, donating materials needed for the study, or just coming into the classroom and helping.


On-going list of ways to involve families in the classroom:

- Grandparent’s Day, activity
- Field trips to multiple places throughout the year
- Family potluck
- Christmas concert
- Muffins for Mom’s activity
- Donuts for Dad’s activity
- Preschool graduation
Appendix L

SCCSD’s Expectations for Communicating with Families

1. Newsletters will be a regular form of communication with all families.
   a. Teachers can choose to send newsletters once a week, every two weeks, or once a month.
   b. Newsletters should provide general information about the classroom, upcoming events, highlights of activities being done in the classroom, and any other information important for families to know.
   c. Newsletters can be printed out for families, sent via e-mail, or posted through the GOLD--online system.

2. GOLD--online system will be used in all classrooms.
   a. Teachers will use the GOLD-online system for recording anecdotal notes, pictures and videos of all students in their classroom.
   b. Teachers will be encouraged to promote the GOLD--online system to all families.
   c. When families have accepted the invitation to the GOLD--online system, teachers will be encouraged to share anecdotal notes, pictures, videos, and lesson plans.

3. A Facebook fan page is an excellent way to promote family involvement.
   a. Families can become fans of your classroom. Teachers can post pictures, videos, and any important information for families to see.
   b. If posting pictures and videos of students, teachers will need to have a discussion with families about privacy concerns. Families can sign a form in the SCCSD parent handbook stating that they do not want their child’s picture or video to be published. If some families choose this option, please plan on posting pictures and videos of the other students.

4. Other ways to communicate with families:
   a. Daily conversations at drop off and pick up.
   b. Phone calls periodically throughout the year.
   c. Communication notebooks--great for families that you don’t on a daily basis.

Appendix M

SCCSD’s Expectations for Conferences

1. Teachers will use the Family Conference Form on the GOLD--online system for conferences, both fall and spring.

2. Before conferences, the teacher will start the Family Conference Form by choosing a few strengths for each student.

3. During conferences, the families will choose a few strengths for their child. Both teachers and families will then create a plan for development and learning for the student. When developing this plan, teachers should explain that this is something that the families want their child to possibly do, by either the next home visit (fall conference) or by the end of the school year (spring conference).

4. After conferences, the teacher will provide the family with a copy of the completed Family Conference Form. Families will need to sign the form and it will be placed in the student’s permanent file.

Appendix N
Making Progress Cards

Get Ready to Read!

Find a Word

Print Knowledge

ONE-TO-ONE

MAKING PROGRESS: DIFFERENTIATING PRINT FROM PICTURES

What You Need:
- pictures of familiar items cut from magazines and advertisements (Some pictures should include print, and some should be simply a picture without any print).
- scissors
- glue
- index cards

What You Do:
1. In advance or together with your child, glue each picture onto an index card.
2. Give your child two cards, one that has a word or words on it and one that has just a picture.
3. Say, "Letters can go together to make words. Look for letters and words on your cards. Show me the card that has a word on it.”
4. Help your child choose a picture with a word on it. You can challenge your child to tell you what words he or she sees in the picture.
5. Repeat with a few cards. Reinforce the purpose of the print in each picture. For example, say, "This cereal box has a word on it that tells us the cereal’s name.”

Why?
Your child will learn to tell the difference between print and pictures and learn one of the purposes of print.

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Get Ready to Read!

Fishing for Letters

Print Knowledge

ONE-TO-ONE

MAKING PROGRESS: MAPPING LETTERS

What You Need:
- construction paper
- magnet
- scissors
- large paper clips
- string
- stick or wooden dowel
- marker

What You Do:
1. Cut out 26 fish shapes from the construction paper.
2. Have your child decorate one side of each fish.
3. On the other side of each fish, write a letter of the alphabet.
4. Slide a paper clip onto each fish’s tail.
5. To make the "fishing rod,” tie the string to the end of the dowel or stick. Tie the magnet to the other end of the string.
6. Scatter the fish on the floor with the letter side down.
7. Have your child try to “catch” a fish with the fishing rod and say the name of the letter on that fish.
8. For a more advanced version of the game, your child can also say the letter’s sound or a word that starts with that sound.

Why?
Your child learns about letter shapes, names and sounds.

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Print Knowledge

What You Need:
- same-colored index cards
- markers

What You Do:
1. Make the game cards. Using only the letters in the child's name, write each letter on two cards so that you have several pairs of cards.
2. Shuffle the cards and spread them out face down.
3. Ask the child to turn over any two cards. If the cards match, help the child name the letter. The child then keeps the cards. If the cards do not match, the child turns the cards back over and tries again.
4. Play continues until all matches have been made.
5. Help your child put the letters in order to spell his or her name.

Why?
Your child learns about letter shapes, names, and sounds.

Get Ready to Read!

Print Knowledge

Word Puzzles

What You Need:
- several empty cartons of foods familiar to your child (e.g., cereals, milk, pasta)
- plastic sandwich bags

What You Do:
1. Cut the carton front into 4-5 puzzle-shaped pieces.
2. Place each puzzle into a bag. If possible, have an intact, identical carton front for your child to see as a model.
3. Put the puzzle together with your child. Ask him to point out the food words on the puzzle and say them out loud.

Why?
Your child learns about print in our everyday world and learns to differentiate print from pictures.
**Get Ready to Read!**

**Build Your Name**

**Emergent Writing**

**MAKING PROGRESS: Printing Name**

**What You Need:**
- uppercase and lowercase plastic letters
- bag or cloth sack
- paper
- pencil or crayons

**What You Do:**
1. Write your child's name at the top of the paper in large letters, using an uppercase letter for the first letter in your child's name, followed by lowercase letters.
2. Place the plastic letters that are in your child's name into the bag. Also include one or two letters that are not part of your child's name.
3. Tell your child to pick a letter out of the bag.
4. Ask your child, "What is the name of the letter that you picked? Look at your name. Is this letter in your name?"
5. Ask your child to place the plastic letter under the written letter, and continue until your child has picked all of the letters in his or her name.
6. When your child's name is complete, ask your child to print it out on the paper.

**Why?**
Your child will become familiar with the letters in his or her name.

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**Get Ready to Read!**

**Clay Letters**

**Emergent Writing**

**MAKING PROGRESS: Letters**

**What You Need:**
- modeling clay or play-dough
- paper and pencil

**What You Do:**
1. Write a few letters of the alphabet on the paper, making them at least 6 inches tall.
2. Roll lumps of clay or dough into long, thin strips.
3. Help your child form the strips into letters. At first, your child can make the letter directly on the written model. He or she can progress to forming the strips below the written letter, using it as a guide.

**Why?**
Your child will become familiar with the shape of the letters and practice forming them independently.

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**Get Ready to Read!**

**Copy a Card**

**Emergent Writing**

**MAKING PROGRESS: Copying**

What You Need:
- paper
- crayons
- 12 index cards, each with a different figure on one side (simple shape, squiggly line, letter)

What You Do:
1. Sit down with your child at a table or on the floor. Give your child a piece of paper and a crayon. Help your child write his or her name on the paper.
2. Place the index cards face down in a pile.
3. Your child should pick a card from the pile. He or she can show the card to you and then draw that figure on the paper. You can do this along with your child on your own paper.
4. After all of the cards have been picked, you and your child can color and decorate the picture.

Why?
Your child practices the fine motor skills that will help him or her learn to form letters.

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**Get Ready to Read!**

**Sequence Story**

**Emergent Writing**

**MAKING PROGRESS: Drawing**

What You Need:
- crayons
- black marker
- stapler
- drawing paper

What You Do:
1. Tell your child about something you've done recently, like shopping or making dinner. On three sheets of paper, draw three simple pictures showing the beginning, middle and end of the experience. Use the pictures to tell the story again.
2. Help your child think of a recent experience. Talk together about the beginning, the middle and the end.
3. Help your child draw three pictures, describing the beginning, middle and end of the experience. Number the pictures in the correct order.
4. Ask your child to tell you about his or her pictures in sequence. Write the description for each picture on that picture.
5. Help your child put the pictures in order. Staple the pages together to make a "book" that your child can use to retell the experience.

Why?
Your child will learn to use words and pictures to communicate an experience and understand the importance of sequence in a story.
Get Ready to Read!

Linguistic Awareness

What You Need:
- the first line of a nursery rhyme, poem or song that your child knows very well
- a ball or beanbag

What You Do:
1. Sit or stand facing your child.
2. Take turns, each saying a word of the line of the rhyme or poem. As you or your child say each word, pass the ball or beanbag back and forth until you have said the whole sentence.

Variation:
- For a challenge, write the line from the rhyme or poem on a strip of paper. Cut the strip into words and hold up or point to the word that is being said.

Why?
Your child learns that sentences can be divided into words.

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www.greatread.org
Get Ready to Read! Find the Compound Words

Linguistic Awareness
MAKING PROGRESS: Segmenting Compound Words

What You Need:
- list of compound words
- pictures of items that illustrate compound words and their parts (for example, a picture of a cup and a picture of a cake for "cupcake")

What You Do:
1. Tell your child that some words are made up of two shorter words put together and that you are going to use some of those words to play a word game.
2. Say a compound word and ask your child to repeat it. For instance, say, "Say cupcake," and let him or her repeat the word.
3. Help your child to select the pictures that show the parts of the word, such as "cup" and "cake."
4. Continue with several other words on the list below.

Why?
Your child learns to listen for the smaller segments of language that are contained in words.

Word List:
Cowboy, baseball, jellyfish, grasshopper, cupcake, doorbell, raincoat, bedroom, football, starfish, haircut, sailboat

Get Ready to Read! Jump for a Rhyme

Linguistic Awareness
MAKING PROGRESS: Rhyming

What You Need:
- rhyming dictionary such as The Scholastic Rhyming Dictionary (Scholastic, Inc., 1994) or online at www.rhymezone.com
- list of pairs of rhyming words
- list of pairs of non-rhyming words

What You Do:
1. Model the activity for your child. Say a pair of words that rhyme. For example, say, "Cat-bat. The end of those words sounds the same... The words rhyme. I'm going to jump for a rhyme!"
2. Say a pair of words that do not rhyme. Tell your child, "Those words don't rhyme, so I'll just sit down."
3. Play the game with your child, beginning with several pairs that rhyme, and then add in some pairs that don't rhyme.

Variation:
- To adjust level of activity, begin with one-syllable words and progress to two- and three-syllable words.

Why?
Your child will become aware of rhymes and learn to identify them.
Linguistic Awareness

What You Need:
- index cards
- glue or tape
- pictures of items familiar to your child; a few items should begin with the same sound

What You Do:
1. Make picture cards: Glue a picture on each index card. Spread the cards out on a table or on the floor.
2. Choose a beginning sound, but don’t tell your child what it is. Collect the cards with pictures that begin with only that sound and give them to your child to hold.
3. Tell your child that his or her job is to figure out what the mystery beginning sound is.
4. Point to each picture on the cards that your child is holding and guide him or her in naming the pictures, emphasizing the first sounds. Help your child figure out the “mystery” first sound.

Why?
Your child will learn that words are made up of sounds and learn to isolate the first sound in a word.

Rhyme-Out

What You Need:
- rhyming words

What You Do:
1. Give your child some examples of words that rhyme. Then, start with a simple word with many rhyming possibilities (cat, tall, sing, bell).
2. Take turns saying a word that rhymes with the first word until you run out of rhymes.
3. If you can, make a list of the rhyming words on paper as they are said.

Why?
Your child will learn to listen for and generate rhymes.
Appendix O

Family Welcome Area

Dodge, Heroman, Colker, and Bickart had suggestions on creating a family welcome area:

- Bulletin board
  - Have up-to-date information about the classroom activities, family-school meetings, and possible community events.
- Sign-in sheets
  - Have the morning and afternoon sign-in sheets available for families to sign-in easily.
- Signs
  - Post signs throughout the classroom that show what the children are learning and how families can support the learning at home.
- Resources
  - Possible books or magazines that family members are able to check out and read

Mayer, Kateri, and Hou suggest:

- Display cultural materials in the family welcome area. “The families will get the message that they are valued, because the stories are about them and the important ways they support their children’s learning” (96).


Appendix P

Reading at Home Family--School Meeting

Reading with your child

Twenty minutes a day is all it takes to build key reading skills. Here are seven ways to build a better reader from birth to age five!

1. Create reading rituals and read together every day

2. Snuggle up close with a book

3. Talk about the pictures and ask questions

4. Share different kinds of books

5. Read with expression

6. Read favourite books again and again

7. Record yourself reading and play it on car trips or as an alternative to television

"Good readers are made on the lap of a parent."
**Predictable rhyming books**


**Repeating phrase or sentence books**


Familiar sequences

books


What is a Teaching Philosophy Statement?

The philosophy statement is a one page document that provides a clear, account of your teaching approach, methods, and expertise. A teaching philosophy statement should answer four fundamental questions: 1) Why do you teach? 2) What do you teach? 3) How do you teach? 4) How do you measure your effectiveness?

Examples of a teaching philosophy:

(An excerpt from) My Kindergarten Teaching Philosophy

I believe that respectful, caring bonds with children and their families are the vital foundation for a wonderful kindergarten experience. As a teacher of the young, I share with parents the responsibility for teaching their child.

I believe that each child has unique strengths, varied prior language learning experiences, and preferred learning styles. My instruction must be differentiated to provide enough challenge and support for all children to build on successfully and to develop positive attitudes about learning.

I believe that emotional engagement is the key to all powerful learning. That is why I bring love, laughter, passion, and meaningful project work into my kindergarten. I always look for ways to personalize learning and engage the child’s imagination.

I believe kindergarten is for language. It is the familiarity with the English language that precedes and underlies excellent phonemic awareness instruction. This familiarity allows the child’s decoding to be error-free and reading to be fluent. While systematically and actively “playing with language,” I encourage my “voracious vocabulary learners” and build comprehension skills.

I believe that young children deserve a multisensory and differentiated literacy program within a joyful, caring community of learners — a child’s garden. Their lives must be valued, celebrated, and incorporated into the literacy curriculum so they care about school and develop a love of learning. A classroom with authentic, meaningful learning always elicits a SMILE.

by Nellie Edge


Appendix R

How to Write a Description of Activities

Examples of describing activities for the Family welcome booklet:

1. **Table Activities 8:30-9:00:**

   Students will arrive and hang up their coats and backpacks. After this, they will go and wash their hands in the bathroom. Next students will go to the circle table and write their name. After this, they will go to their assigned table and complete the activity that is sitting at their table. Each activity is specifically chosen based off the GOLD assessment. Examples of activities are: counting, sorting, patterning with colored dinosaurs, cars, and animals; reading library books; and using white boards with markers.

2. **Large group 9:00-9:15:**

   Large group will consist of the students sitting on their carpet spots. The students will choose their job for the day. The teacher helper will read the morning message. The calendar helper will count the days of the month. A student will be chosen to do the alphabet chart. The last part of large group is a scheduled activity from the lesson plans. Typically it is a book read to the group.

   Each teacher will type out their schedule and describe each activity so parents have a better understanding of what happens in preschool each day.
Appendix S

How to Write Policies and Procedures

Writing out policies and procedures allows parents to have a better understanding of what preschool is.

Here are a few samples of policies and procedures:

1. Birthdays

We celebrate birthdays in our classroom. Parents are allowed to bring treats, but please check with Mrs. Barrett first in case any students have allergies. On your child’s birthday, your child will receive a birthday crown and we will sing Happy Birthday to them during snack.

2. Toys

Toys are not allowed in our preschool classroom, so please do not send any to school with your child.

3. Recess

We will go out to recess daily, once in the morning for about 15 minutes and once in the afternoon for 30 minutes. Dress your child according to the weather. We will go outside as long as the weather is above 20 degrees. If we are unable to go outside, we will use the gross motor room, where there are swings, bikes, and other things to play with; go to the big gym, where we can do a variety of things; go out in the hallway, where we do relay races, obstacle course, and other quiet activities; or in the lunch room side of the gym, where we play structured games like duck-duck-goose.