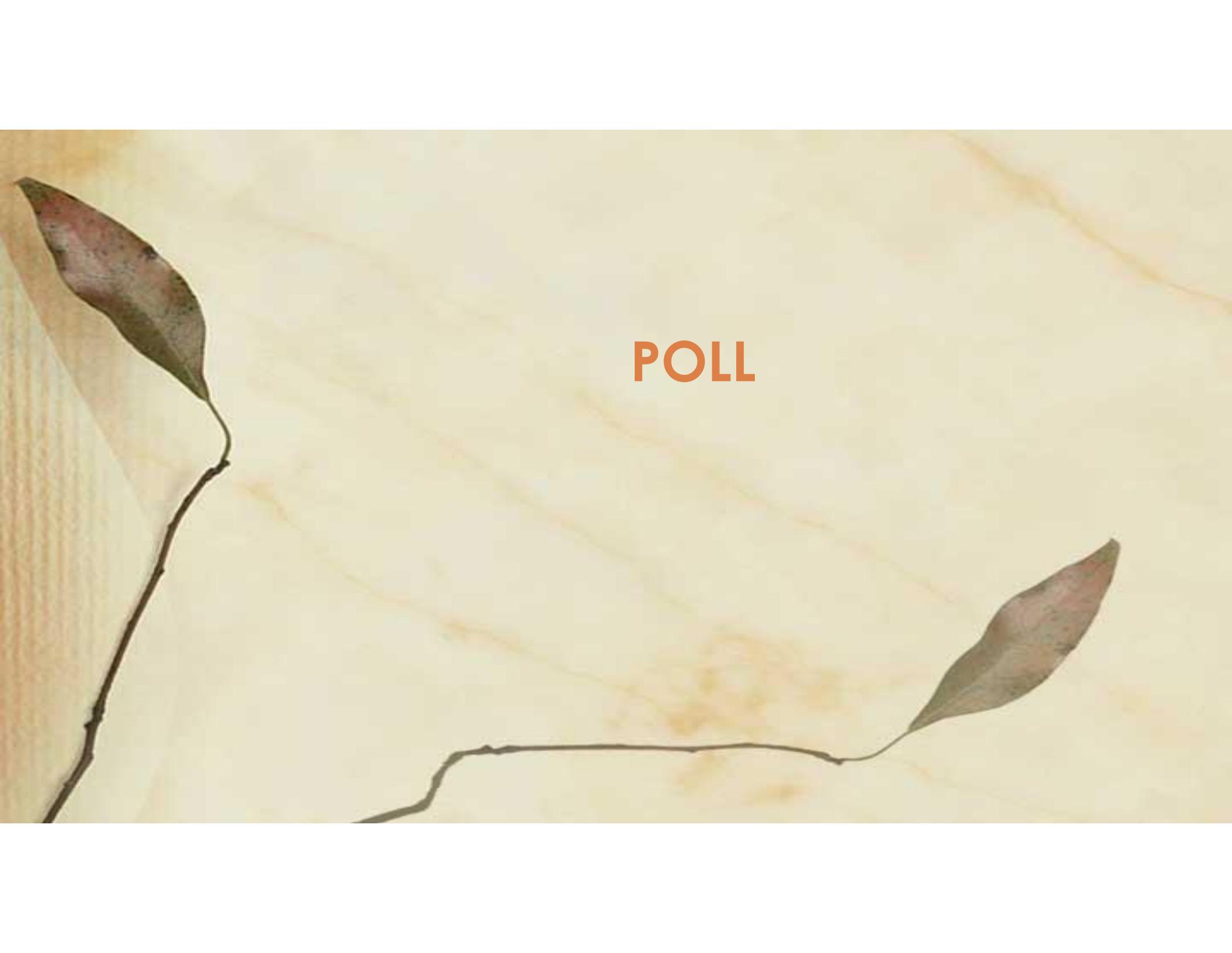




Family Engagement

Principles of family engagement

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POLL



Overview of objectives

- After reviewing the 7 principals participants will:
 - Become more mindful
 - *Of the value of engaging families*
 - Have knowledge of what a partnership
 - *and how to communicate with parents*
 - Strategies to engage families
 - as partners in their child's education



Family Teacher relationships

- **Family-teacher relationships** are vital for the optimal care of children.
- They help strengthen adult's **knowledge**, build children's **emotional health**, and provide more **support systems** for children.
- Successfully building **positive relationships** with parents requires that teachers take note of **barriers** and utilize a **variety of communication techniques** to overcome them.
- It is through communication that acceptance of others occurs.
- We advocate that teachers need to make a paradigm switch from seeing families as annoying (or even obstacles) to seeing them as partners in the education of their children.

“As teachers welcome families and their experiences into the classroom, it becomes a richer place for everyone.”



Dilemmas and Barriers

- Lack of a school environment that supports parent/family involvement;
- School practices that do not accommodate the diversity of family needs;
- Child care constraints;
- Families' past negative experiences with schools and/or feelings of uncertainty about "treading on school territory."



Dilemmas and Barriers

- Primacy of basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter take precedence over educational needs);
- Feelings of inadequacy associated with difference in income or education;
- Safety, especially in inner-city school neighborhoods;
- Uncertainty about what to do; and,
- Lack of time.



From a parents perspective activity

Scenario 1

- Imagine you are the teacher of a student who has one parent, a father who is working in the evening. The father wants to know how his son is doing in school and is concerned with his son's achievement.

Scenario 2

- Imagine you are the teacher of a student who lives with her mother and grandmother, along with other siblings. The student consistently has behavioral issues and fails to turn in paperwork requested by the facility. She visits her father on the weekend.

Scenario 3

- Imagine you are the teacher of a student whose parents want to volunteer in the classroom. The father is incarcerated and the mother doesn't have a High school diploma so she is ashamed to approach the teacher about her desire to help.



Take into Consideration when we don't understand ... We must BELIEVE

- **Believe** they want the best for their child –but they may not agree with you
- **Believe** they are not having an easy life and you may not know the challenges they've faced
- **Believe** that there is no one book on “cultural awareness” that's going to help you relate to each individual family



Remember These 7 Guiding Principles

Principle 1: build a partnership

- Know what a partnership is and the key elements of a positive partnership

Principle 2: Know your families

- Developing an understanding of the family's past experiences, current situation, concerns, strengths, and potential.

Principle 3: Demonstrate Respect

- Programs Demonstrate respect, genuineness, and empathy for all family members, as defined by the family.



Remember These 7 Guiding Principles

Principle 4: Use one way communication

- Communicate Often and in Various Forms

Principle 5: Use Two way communication

- Teachers and programs engage families in two-way communication

Principle 6: Be Resourceful

- Programs provide learning activities for the home and in the community

Principle 7: Collaboration

- Programs invite families to participate in decision making and goal setting for their child



Principle 1: build a partnership Knowing what a partnership is ?

- What is engagement?
 - *a mutually beneficial interaction that results in participants feeling valued for their unique contribution*
- What about involvement?
 - *“involvement” is that it is also used to describe a variety of one-way communication processes like surveys, newsletters and “talking head” info sessions.*
- What is the difference between engagement and involvement?
 - *So the distinction between engagement and involvement seems to be grounded in the act of **reciprocity** or **mutual benefit**.*



Key Elements

- Demonstrating respect, genuineness, and empathy for all family members, as defined by the family.
- Active listening to each family member.
- Developing an understanding of the family's past experiences, current situation, concerns, strengths, and potential.
- Responding to families' concrete needs quickly.
- Clearly establishing the purpose of involvement with the family.



Key Elements

- Being aware of one's own biases and prejudices about families.
- Validating the participatory role of the family in planning and making decision for their child.
- Being consistent, reliable and honest with families.
- Fully disclosing information with families.
- Honoring the culture, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of children, youth, and families and respect difference of sexual orientation.



Good
Morning
Sue
How was
your
weekend?

Principle 2: Know your families

- Make connections with families meaningful
- Address each family member by name
- Intentionally engage them at each encounter

- They should leave:
 - knowing their child is in good care
 - with knowledge about their child's day
 - given an idea to supporting learning

We talked
about the color
red today.. Try
finding things
that are red at
home

What is a Family ?



“Parent” or “Family” refers to anyone actively involved in raising and educating a child.

Traditional?

Blended?

Extended?

Multi-generational?

Migrant?

Minority?

Single-parent?

Divorced?

Other?



POVERTY BY DEMOGRAPHIC	ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	FAMILY	PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS	
<p>Child poverty rate: 25%</p> <p>Senior poverty rate: 11%</p> <p>Women in poverty: 17.7%</p> <p>Percent of single-parent families with related children that are below poverty: 35%</p> <p>Number of Black and Hispanic children below 200% poverty: 1,260,000</p>	<p>Poverty rate: 16.5%</p> <p>Extreme poverty rate: 7.2%</p> <p>Unemployment rate: 6.5%</p> <p>Food insecurity: 14.1%</p> <p>Low-income families that work: 37.3%</p> <p>Minimum Wage: \$7.93</p> <p>Percent of jobs that are low-wage: 32.2%</p> <p>Percent of individuals who are uninsured: 20%</p> <p>Number of Black and Hispanic children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment: 796,000</p>	<p>Teen birth rate per 1,000: 32</p> <p>Children living in single parent families: 39%</p> <p>Children in foster care: 18,753</p> <p>Percent of children in immigrant families: 30%</p> <p>Number of grandparents raising grandchildren: 352,311</p>	<p>Adults and children receiving welfare (TANF): 99,825</p> <p>Children receiving food stamps (SNAP): 1,207,000</p> <p>EITC recipients: 2,000,000</p> <p>Households receiving federal rental assistance: 195,706</p> <p>Families receiving child care subsidies: 58,600</p>	<p>Participants in all Head Start programs: 46,634</p> <p>Number of children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP: 2,470,453</p> <p>Number of women and children receiving WIC (Women, Infants and Children supplemental nutrition program): 483,565</p> <p>Households receiving LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program): 84,495</p>



Principle 3: Demonstrate Respect

- Embracing Differences among Families
- Realize Diversity Is an Issue Worthy of Attention
- Ask Parents for Help

parents can be your most valuable resources.

- Parents can share their own cultural heritage with children or with staff in a variety of ways
- Parents can be help to solve problems stemming from differences. Multicultural education helps children, parents, and teachers learn.
- Teachers that have families in their classroom that differ in culture and ethnicity, and who speak a second language, need to view these differences as beneficial in that they help teach children about diversity



Principle 3: Demonstrate Respect

- Parents are a child's first teachers.
- The American family has changed dramatically over the last 50 years.
- Parents don't always recognize the importance of becoming involved or know where to begin.
- Any parent can be "hard to reach." Parents must be identified and approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, family situation, education, or income.
- Successful parent involvement nurtures relationships and partnerships. It strengthens bonds between home and school, parent and teacher, parent and school, school and community.
- The parent is the central contributor to a child's education. Schools can either ignore this fact or recognize the potential of the parent.
- schools today mirror the world, a multicultural, multiethnic world, children will live in as adults, should give us hope for erasing inequities. Parents can help teachers construct "stronger mirrors."



Principle 3: Demonstrate Respect

- Be Attentive to Your Program
 - *What issues are families facing?*
 - *Are there staff assumptions regarding parents?*
 - *Are families empowered and honored?*
 - *Identify parent/family perception of your “Relationship”.*
 - **SEEK PARENT INPUT!**
- Provide Parent Places
 - Where should guests park?
 - Where do personal belongings go?
 - Is there a place for visitors to sit?
 - Are there waiting materials?
 - Is there a recommended visit time?
 - Might refreshments be available?
 - Who will greet & meet guests?



Principle 4: Collaboration

- Being collaborative in your family engagement efforts can mean integrating outside organizations such as local nonprofits or community centers in family engagement activities.
- Another way to be collaborative is to offer family members a voice in school policy by forming advisory councils, focus groups or family member positions on the school's governing board.
- Bring in outside organizations; and,
- Provide families a voice in school decision-making.

Gathering information

- Use how and what questions?
 - How can we help your child?
 - What do you like best about ...
- How can we support ...?
- Listen between the lines...
- Ask for input...Tell me
- What works for your child?
- How do ...?

After an issue has been raised and addressed make note to follow-up.



Principle 5: Use one way communication

One-way Communication

- Although two-way communication is essential, one-way communications can also play a role. Parents are excited to hear about what is going on at school, even when this communication is one-way. The joy of learning about classroom activities was clearly communicated by one kindergarten parent. Thoughtful communication helps parents know what the school's expectations are and gives them some notion of what is happening in their children's classrooms.

Newsletters.

- Newsletters can include items such as quotes from children, children's artwork, book suggestions for families, words to songs or finger plays, photos showing what the children are doing, recipes, and calendars.

Handbooks.

- Parents should have a copy of the school policies clearly outlined. Having handbooks in languages appropriate for the families (or even on audiotape) helps to reduce misunderstandings, such as when a child is too sick to be at school and why.

Family bulletin board.

- Teachers can use bulletin boards to post pictures of what occurred at school that day. Other examples include displays with photos of all children and their families or perhaps displays that also include teachers and their families.

Notes.

- Notes from the teacher may be formal or informal. Why not send artwork home with captions, child's words, or other information that give context to the piece?



Principle 6: Use Two way communication

- **Two-way Communication**

- Interactions between schools and families should be continuous and ongoing.
- The most valuable interactions are those that go in both directions—teachers learn from parents and parents learn from teachers.
- These two-way interactions make sense.
- Both teachers and parents are concerned about a child's growth and development.
- It makes sense that teachers and parents would work together in the best interest of the child.

- Email.
- Phone conversations.
- Text Messages
- Opportunities for family members to be part of the classroom.
- Social events.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Social Media



Jasmine's Day

Take 1

Teacher: Hi, Raymundo! I'm so glad to see you. I'd love to tell you about Jasmine's day. She cried only for a couple of minutes after you left this morning; then she was off playing with her friends. They built a tractor out of the hollow blocks and used amazing creativity in their play. Jasmine pretended to dig up soil and plant strawberries, and then the children brought baskets to harvest their ripe berries. Jasmine's social skills are really blossoming. She included all the children and made sure everyone had a role to play. She also has a new painting in her cubby. She is very excited about it. Be sure and grab it on your way out!

[While turning away from Raymundo, say pleasantly ...]
Nice to talk to you. See you tomorrow!

Raymundo: Bye...

- What is your reaction?
- How do you think the parent felt?
- What suggestions do you have to make this a more respectful conversation?



Take 2

Teacher: Hi, Raymundo! How are you?

Raymundo: I'm fine. We're really tired, though. We just got back last night from a visit with Jasmine's cousins.

Teacher: Oh, nice! How was the trip?

Raymundo: The kids had a great time. My sister has a strawberry farm, and the kids played on the tractors and picked strawberries.

Teacher: Oh, wow! What a wonderful experience for Jasmine! I'm so pleased to hear about your trip. It helps me understand Jasmine's play today. She and her friends built a tractor out of big blocks, planted strawberries, and then harvested them.

Raymundo: I had no idea she remembered all those details!

Teacher: Their play was so creative, and she included all the children. I took some notes while the children were talking. Would you like to read them?

Raymundo: Sure! Hey, we brought back some strawberry plants for our garden. Do you think the kids would like to see them?

Teacher: Absolutely! We are just about ready to get our garden going, and seeing strawberry plants would be an interesting experience for the kids. Do you have time to bring them in and talk to the kids about them?

Raymundo: Sure. I could bring them Thursday morning and spend an hour or so here.

Teacher: I'll talk to the other teachers and put it on the calendar. Tomorrow, I'll start the discussion with children about strawberries and strawberry plants. I'm curious about what they already know and about what their questions might be. Let's tell Jasmine our idea!

- What is your reaction?
- How do you think the parent felt?
- What suggestions do you have to make this a more respectful conversation?

Principle 7: Be Resourceful

3 levels of engagement...

1. Ideas recommended to parents simple suggestion

- Provide parents with activities they can find useful in interactions with their children at home

2. Suggestions with prompts—low cost/no cost props...give-a-way or make-and-take activities

- Give-a-way Resource - lunch bag with resources to support color learning

3. Resources shared with families

- Lending Library
- Activity Kits





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Resources

- Hogue, I.E., Jacobi, E.F., & Wittreich, Y.M. (2003). *Getting Parents Involved: A Handbook of Ideas for Teachers, Schools and Communities*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Excerpted and adapted from *Communications Skills for Challenging Conversations*, a training for program administrators, Copyright © 2009 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.