

1) What is Family?

- a) It is the responsibility of early childhood professionals to take the lead in developing respectful, supportive family partnerships. Consider your answers to these questions as you think about each child/family in your care.
- How do you view the child's family?
 - Do you believe this to be an equal partnership?
 - How do you recognize and respect the family's expertise?
 - Are you genuine and approachable with families?
 - Do you have conversations with families, not just give reports about the child?
 - Are there parents and/or families whom you don't like or understand? How might that affect communication and relationships with the parents/family? What can be done to develop understanding or acceptance of others?

2) Respecting Cultures

- a) How do you know when you honor and respect each child's unique situation? When have you taken extra care to acknowledge and respect our family structure?
- b) Looking at the child in context means taking into account the cultural background of the child's family. Culture plays a major role in shaping a child's early experiences. Those experiences, in turn, affect development and learning. Our own cultural background affects our beliefs, values, and practices as well. What is one personal trigger that may be having a negative impact on your interactions with families?
- c) How are children in your care learning to embrace differences? How do they see their home culture represented in your classroom? How is the local community culture represented in your program?

3) Family and Teacher Perspectives

- a) Taking a ‘child-in-the-context-of-family approach’ requires you to take into account situational factors the family is experiencing in addition to the child’s developmental needs. What do you do to become aware of family structure, stressors, and challenges? In what ways might these issues be impacting your partnerships?
- b) The first and most important step to inclusivity is understanding the people you are striving to include—in this case, the families. Whether we recognize it or not, most of us have a preconceived idea of what the average family looks like. This image may vary from person to person, but we often use our preconceived idea as a template for interacting with students’ families. While most professional educators make a conscious effort to look past biases towards race, gender, or marital status of guardians, there can still be misunderstandings and biases based on economic situation and culture. Think about a family that you do not enjoy interacting with. How might your own biases be impacting this relationship?

4) Parents and Learning Advocates

- a) How have you engaged with families to deepen your understanding of the “whole child”?
- b) What steps do you take to ensure that families feel valued in your program?

5) Establishing Shared Goals

- a) How do you communicate that you want to know what matters to the family about their child’s experience and what their hopes are for their child? How do you incorporate this information into the child’s experience in your program?
- b) When you can’t do everything a family wants, how do you give them a respectful explanation that also lets them know that you value and respect their ideas? How do you work together to agree on a goal?