

# Strategies to Develop Family Engagement for Educators



# Family Engagement Reflection

The purpose of this tool is to support you with your ongoing collaborative partnership with families. These strategies and reflective questions can be incorporated into your daily practice when communicating with families.

## 1. Reflecting on your own beliefs as an educator

- Engage in culturally sensitive communication and respect differences in family structures (i.e. referring the adults to “families” rather than “parents”)

### Reflective Questions

- *What am I doing to build trusting relationships with families?*
- *How do I encourage families to share what they know about their child and their uniqueness?*
- *How do I ensure families, staff and children have a voice in establishing a common goal?*

## 2. Building Trust and Communication

- Stay positive by showing respect, integrity, competence and personal regard towards each family in order to build a two-way collaborative partnership
- Think about your strategies in meeting the needs of second language learners and their families

### Reflective Questions

- *What do I expect from the families? How do families know what is expected of them? What do families expect from me?*

## 3. Having the Conversation

### At Orientation and Subsequent Yearly Thereafter:

- Share that we are committed in Niagara to have an approach available for every child in licensed childcare settings to improve the quality of the program developed for each and every child.
- Review the *Introduction to Quality Child Care Niagara* with the parents/guardians and give them the document.
- Ask parent/guardian for their consent to participate in this opportunity and confirm their consent by signing the Consent Forms for both DPS and Speech and Language Developmental checklist. Behaviour C.A.R.E. consent form and checklist is completed as needed basis.
- Ask parent/guardian if they have any questions or reservations about the process of information on the handout.
- Ask parent/guardian if they have any current concerns about their child and provide appropriate resources.

### After Administration:

- Plan ahead – **Where** to share the outcome? **When** to share the outcome?  
**Who** you will be sharing it with? (anticipate parent/guardian reaction, know their priorities and day-to-day stressors) **What** your message is? (be specific/concrete examples)
- Pair up team members to create mentoring opportunities
- Be clear with your messages and your observations. Give simple clear answers to parent’s questions.
  - *Examples*
    1. **DPS:**
      - 6 and below: “Based on the outcome, we recommend further follow up”. Offer support by sharing activities and strategies that will be provided at the centre and that the families can do at home.
      - 7 and above: “As you know the DPS was completed last week. Based on the outcome, there is no further follow up unless you have concerns”.

# Family Engagement Reflection Continued...

Remember, DPS is *not* a “test” and there is *no* “pass” or “fail”. Be mindful of the language that is used when communicating.

“What are your feelings about the outcome of the tools? What are you seeing at home?” Pause to give parent’s/guardians a chance to share perspectives and reactions and to ask questions.

“With your consent, we will complete these tools next year to monitor continued progress.”

2. **Speech and Language Developmental Checklist:** Consult and collaborate with the parents/guardians when completing the checklist. If English is their second language, ask “Tell me about what you are seeing at home?”

If there are concerns, “Based on the outcome, we recommend further follow up which would be a referral to a Speech Pathologist.” If a strong concern is voiced throughout the year, the checklist can be completed again with parent/guardian consent.

If there are no concerns and some skills have not been observed at child care, brainstorm ways together to help the child use the skills in the child care setting. “We will continue to provide opportunities in the program and connect back with you if anything changes.”

3. **Behaviour C.A.R.E. Checklist:** “I have been noticing Bobby take an interest in\_\_\_” (speak to the child’s strength) “As we have been sharing with you, we have observed Bobby \_\_\_\_\_ (give specific factual examples). Bobby is \_\_\_\_\_ (speak to the child’s strength). Based on the outcome, we would like to suggest additional resources for Bobby which would be a referral for a behaviour consultant services.”

“What are your feelings about the outcome of the tools? What are you seeing at home?” (Pause to give parent’s/guardians a chance to share perspectives and reactions and to ask questions).

- Do not dispute, educate. Explore and discuss potential solutions and strategies together. Outline what referral processes are, who, where etc. The final decision is with the parent/guardian. “As the parent/guardian, what would you like to do?”

## 4. Ongoing Family Engagement

- Distribute a Family Survey at least once a year to gain further insight on how you can support the families in the program
- Get to know families through a ‘Meet the educator and staff’ night or by holding fun family events. Provide the families with a ‘Getting to know your family’ or ‘All about us’ page

### Sources and For More Information:

ABC’s Family Engagement: <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/ABCs-Family-Engagement.pdf>; Family and Community Engagement: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-antibias-education/family-and-community-engagement>; ; Promoting Family Engagement: Communicating with Families: <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/family-engagement/lesson-3>  
We have to Talk: A Step-By-Step Checklist for difficult Conversations-Judy ringer: <https://www.judyringer.com/resources/articles/we-have-to-talk-a-stepbystep-checklist-for-difficult-conversations.php>; Sharing Concerns With Families: [https://static.virtuallabschool.org/atmt/families/PS.FAM\\_3.Communication\\_L1.SharingConcernsWithFamilies.pdf](https://static.virtuallabschool.org/atmt/families/PS.FAM_3.Communication_L1.SharingConcernsWithFamilies.pdf); *How Does Learning Happen?* <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf>; Strategies; College of Early Childhood Educators Practice Guidelines 2017: [https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/PracticeGuidelines\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/PracticeGuidelines_ENG.pdf);  
Excerpts from “ELECT”: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/ExcerptsFromELECT.pdf>; Code of Ethics Standards of Practice [https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/Code\\_and\\_Standards\\_2017.pdf](https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/Code_and_Standards_2017.pdf)

# How To Design a Family Engagement Survey

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for RECEs defines responsibilities to families, which includes building and maintaining responsive and collaborative relationships. How do programs know if their strategies for engaging families are effective? Programs can measure engagement using a survey.

Information gathered in a survey can provide insights into families' needs. This in turn helps program staff to be responsive to those needs.

## 1. Introduction

- A Letter of Introduction to a Family Engagement Survey or introductory comments at the beginning of the survey should inform families about the purpose of your survey

## 2. Ask the right questions.

- What answers or information would you like to gain once the survey is complete?
- Consider your program's policies and program statement implementation
- Offer space to include comments after each section
- Keep in mind when creating the Family Engagement Survey, each question should focus on one topic only.
  - Example: *How satisfied are you with the program? How satisfied are you with the staff?* instead of *How satisfied are you with the program and staff?*

### Open-Ended Questions

- Provide a box for families to write their own feedback
- When you want deeper insight to a question
- Example: *What would you like to learn more about?*

### Multiple choice questions

- Provide more than a Yes or No. More than two options are provided
- Example: *The centre keeps me well informed through the following. (check all that apply)*  
\_\_ Verbal Communication \_\_ Documentation \_\_ Newsletters \_\_ Other (i.e. apps, Facebook) \_\_ Posted Notices

### Scale Questions

- Gives a rating on a scale. The scale can be rated by numbers (1,2,3,4,5) or words (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, etc.)
- Example: *The educator interacts with the children in a positive way*  
 Always  Very Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

## 3. Ensure the survey appeals to the Parent

- Make sure the Family Engagement Survey is interesting and appealing
- Ensure the survey is brief and easy for families to access
- Avoid using industry jargon. Use family friendly terms
- Offer an incentive such as a gift card or freebie
- Keep in mind a suggestion box may provide an opportunity for ongoing program specific feedback from families

## 4. Collect and use the data

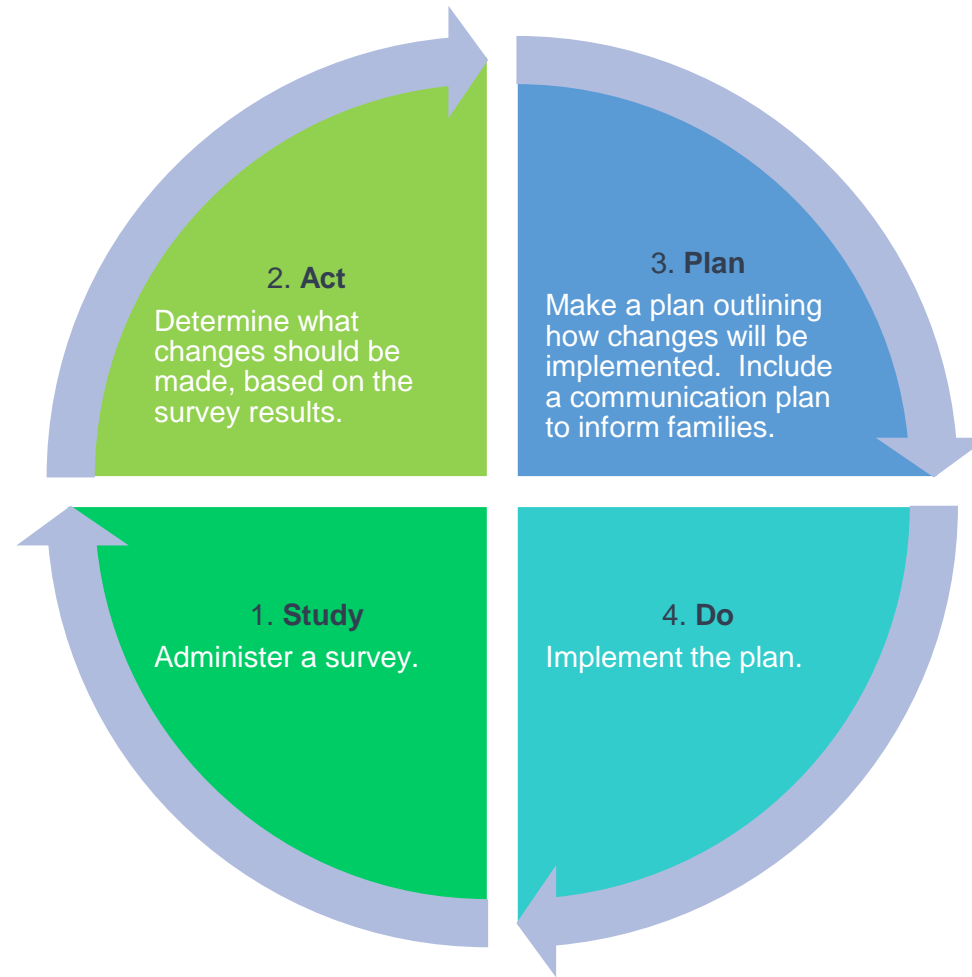
- Thank the families for their time and inform them of the results of the survey as soon as possible
- Create a plan of action with a timeline for the completion and keep the families informed of these next steps
- Programs can create a long term goal and a short term goal as well
- Implement the changes and survey again

### Sources and For More Information:

- (1) [https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet\\_0.pdf](https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf) (2) <https://blog.leadquizzes.com/8-types-of-survey-questions/>

# How To Design a Family Engagement Survey Continued...

Family engagement surveys should be part of a yearly cycle of continuous quality improvement:



Niagara Region Children's Services can provide support to childcare programs to:

- Review their current survey
- Develop a new survey
- Analyze survey data
- Use data to support program planning
- Develop a plan to report the results back to families

To access support, please contact:

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