THE HEAD START PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

PROMOTING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL READINESS, FROM PRENATAL TO AGE 8

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

Office of Head Start

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

August 15, 2011

Dear Head Start Colleagues,

I am pleased to introduce the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework, the first of its kind. The Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework provides programs with a research based, organizational guide for implementing relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards. The PFCE Framework marks the beginning of a new wave of technical assistance resources that will be made available to programs in the coming year through the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement.

Because supporting children's school readiness is an ongoing partnership between staff and families, the PFCE Framework is a tool that all staff and families can use. I invite you to review this valuable resource and to consider ways to improve and promote parent and family engagement in your program. The PFCE Framework can be used in program-wide strategic planning, program design and management, systems of continuous improvement, professional development for staff, and with governing bodies and parent groups. It can be used to help improve program services or to inform community partners about Head Start parent and family engagement goals and the importance of those goals for school readiness.

Families play a critical role in helping their children be ready for school and for a lifetime of academic success, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs are valuable partners with families in this endeavor. Head Start Parent Involvement has continually evolved since its inception in 1965. The Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework begins the next chapter in Head Start's long history of leading the field in engaging families and supporting children's ongoing learning and development.

Thank you for the work you do every day for children and families.

Sincerely,

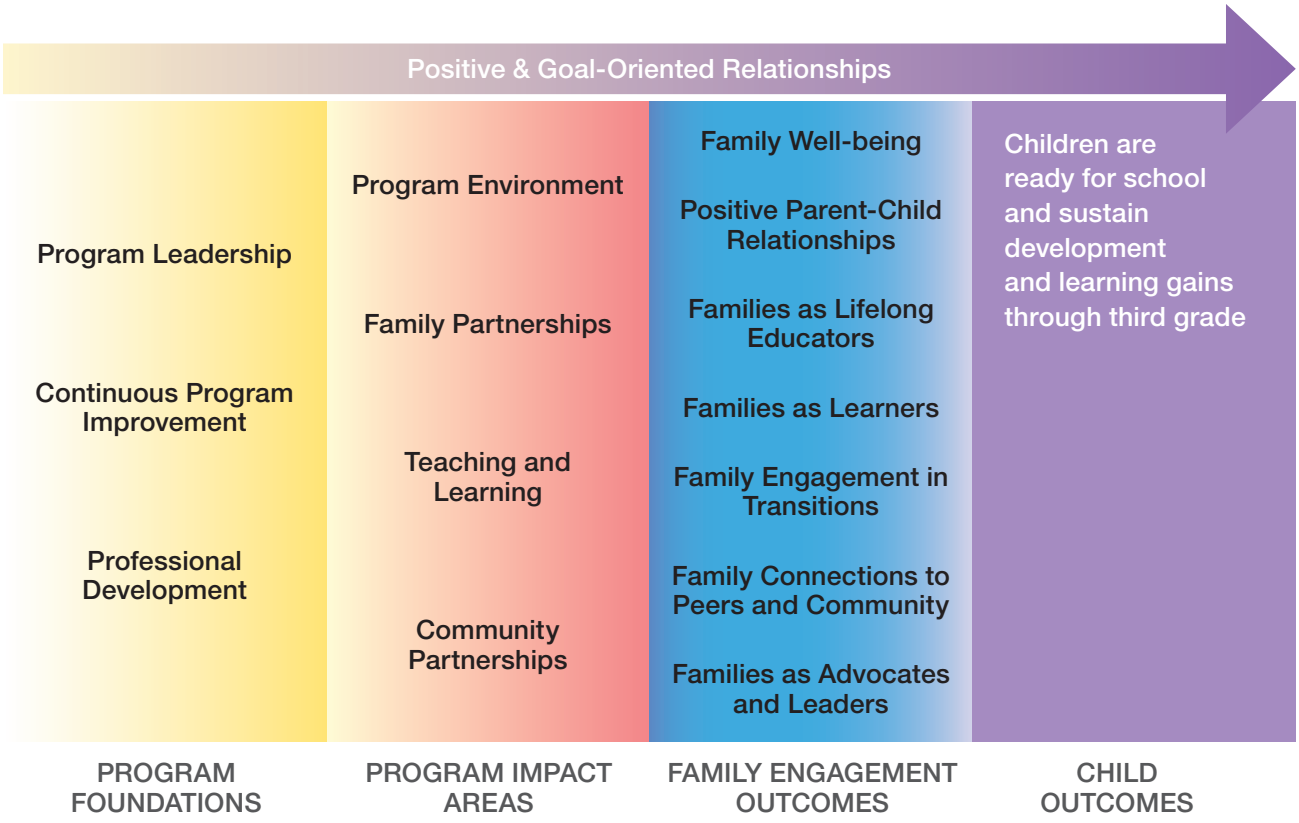
Yvette Sanchez Fuentes
Director
Office of Head Start

THE HEAD START PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK ENGAGING FAMILIES—PRENATAL TO AGE 8

Parent and family engagement in Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) is about building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a road map for progress in achieving the kinds of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. The PFCE Framework was developed in partnership with programs, families, experts, and the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. It is a research-based approach to program change that shows how an agency can work together as a whole—across systems and service areas—to promote parent and family engagement and children's learning and development.

PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.



The first section of the PFCE Framework outlines the importance of a systemic, integrated and comprehensive approach to family engagement. Next, the PFCE Framework discusses parent and family engagement activities in the context of Program Foundations and Program Impact Areas. Essentially, when parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across Program Foundations and Program Impact Areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved. The PFCE Framework goes on to describe seven Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes. For each of the seven outcomes, a definition is given, and examples of Program Foundations strategies and Program Impact Area strategies are provided. In addition, there are examples of family progress for each outcome area. Finally, the PFCE Framework includes ideas for how programs might use this document.

A SYSTEMIC, INTEGRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Because parent, family, and community engagement practices cross into different service areas, PFCE goals, plans and activities must be systemic, integrated, and comprehensive across the entire HS/EHS organization.

By systemic, we mean that parent, family, and community engagement is anchored in leadership priorities, program management, continuous improvement systems, and staff development. By integrated we mean that by carrying out PFCE activities throughout the entire organization, programs are much more likely to make the kind of family engagement progress that best supports child outcomes. For example, directors, teachers, assistant teachers, family support staff, home visitors, and health and disabilities staff, all play a role in engaging families and supporting school readiness. By comprehensive, we mean that staff consider the strengths, interests and needs of each child and family, and connect families with services and resources to achieve their goals.

The PFCE Framework builds on many years of parent involvement in Head Start. For example, parent decision-making has always been an important part of parent involvement in Head Start. The PFCE Framework builds on this tradition and suggests that in many circumstances parent input (from parents who participate in policy council and parent committees as well as parents who do not) could be used in a systemic and integrated way. Further, program activities that promote family involvement have always been an important part of parent and family engagement in Head Start. Programs are more likely to make progress in achieving family engagement and school readiness goals, when these activities are tied to a systemic and integrated approach.

PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS

Head Start and Early Head Start organizations need strong foundations to make the kind of progress that leads to lasting change for families and enduring progress for children. The foundations for successful

parent and family engagement include the following: Program Leadership, Continuous Improvement and Professional Development of all staff.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP *The director, the governing board, policy council, parent committees and management teams determine the way that Head Start and Early Head Start programs engage parents, families, and the community.* To begin, program leadership sets a clear vision and ambitious goals for PFCE. Program leadership makes sure that program systems (such as communication and human resources) integrate practices that help parent and family engagement to flourish. Leadership outlines strategic plans that bring systems, people, and activities together in a way that values staff and enhances parent and family engagement in the program.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT *Leadership is committed to continuously improving systems and activities to engage and support parents and families.* With a strategic PFCE vision and goals set by program leadership, programs can conduct staff and parent surveys and use data from surveys, intakes, assessments and family partnership processes to set benchmarks. From there, staff can review reports, assess program progress, make decisions, and change or refine PFCE goals and actions.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT *PFCE training is important to all staff, but their professional development will focus uniquely around their roles in the program.* To have a solid foundation for achieving family engagement outcomes, professional development plans should be comprehensive and include training, supervision, recognition, and information about career options. Giving staff members regular opportunities to come together as a "community of learners" helps them find mutual support and ideas for turning training and information into action. It also helps them gain new insights from working in cross-service area teams, such as teaching, family services, and home visiting.

PROGRAM IMPACT AREAS

With a solid PFCE foundation in place, program leadership and staff are set to work in partnership with parents, families, and the community on activities that promote family engagement and work toward family goals. To do this, programs align PFCE strategies across four impact areas: Program Environment, Teaching and Learning, Family Partnerships, and Community Partnerships.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT *Families feel welcomed, valued, and respected by program staff.* To make an impact on program environment, program leadership supports all staff to build relationships, both with each other and with families and communities. Staff and families work together to set expectations and support family goals and children's learning and development in culturally and

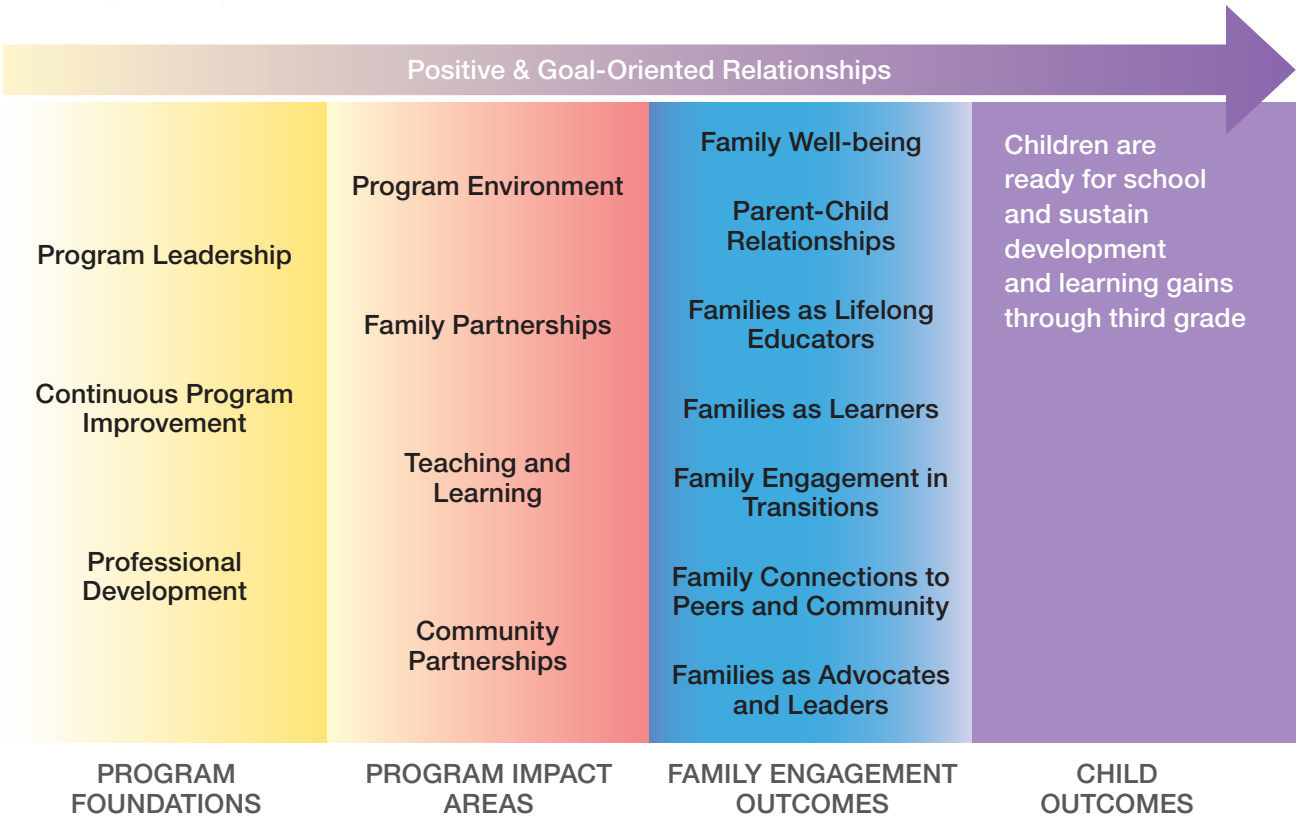
linguistically responsive ways. Two-way communication and relationship building with families are adapted to meet changing family and community circumstances. In addition, opportunities are provided for family support and development through the family partnership process and through intentional parent/family peer groups within the program and community.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS *Families work with staff to identify and achieve their goals and aspirations.* To make an impact in the area of family partnerships, staff and families build ongoing, respectful and goal-oriented relationships. This means identifying and acting on family goals and aspirations and using program and community supports and resources to promote progress on family and child development goals.

TEACHING AND LEARNING *Families are engaged as equal partners in their children's learning and development.* To make an impact in engaging families as equal partners in children's learning and development, staff and families work together to build strong relationships that support information sharing with each other about children's learning and developmental progress. Programs ensure that families have access to information about their child and that the information is understandable and meaningful. Parents share their knowledge about their child's interests and progress at home, and together staff and families use this information to set and work toward goals for the child in the classroom, home, and community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS *Communities support families' interests and needs and encourage parent and family engagement in children's learning.* To make an impact in the area of community partnerships, staff and families collaborate with community, health,

PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



mental health, social service, and school partners to build peer networks, link families and children to needed services, and support successful transitions for children and families.

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Programs are more likely to achieve family engagement outcomes when PFCE foundations are in place and PFCE activities are occurring across impact areas. Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) Outcomes will support promising child outcomes such as enhanced school readiness skills, sustained learning, and developmental gains across early childhood education and into elementary school.

The PFE Outcomes include examples of program strategies that are informed by both research and performance standards. This is not an exhaustive list of strategies. The assumption is that program strategies are locally and individually tailored. For example, program strategies would be individualized based on culture and language and different parent strengths, challenges, and perspectives — including those of fathers, mothers, grandparents, kith and kinship caregivers, LGBT parents, expectant parents, teen parents, guardians and others.

While all of the PFE Outcomes are relevant for each program, not all of the PFE Outcomes are relevant for each family. This means that while there are examples of progress for families included here, each family's HS/EHS experience is uniquely determined by their own interests, needs and goals

Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes

1. FAMILY WELL-BEING	Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.
2. POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS	Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.
3. FAMILIES AS LIFELONG EDUCATORS	Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.
4. FAMILIES AS LEARNERS	Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
5. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSITIONS	Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school.
6. FAMILY CONNECTIONS TO PEERS AND COMMUNITY	Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.
7. FAMILIES AS ADVOCATES AND LEADERS	Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

they have for themselves and their children. It starts with meeting families where they are, engaging families in the opportunities and experiences they choose, and deciding what progress would mean together. It means recognizing barriers to progress and figuring out ways to deal with them. For example, what is the quality of program

partnerships with particular community agencies that might be useful connections for families? How much adversity are families facing? Are families meeting basic needs, having income and employment difficulties, or facing homelessness, depression, or family violence? What are the types of services and resources available (or not available) in the community that can help families? Progress is something that programs and families can define and determine together.

The following section includes examples of strategies for each PFE Outcome. Specifically, each outcome includes:

- the defined parent and family engagement outcome;
- examples of program strategies related to the PFCE Framework Foundations;
- examples of program strategies related to the PFCE Framework Impact Areas; and
- examples of progress for families.

1. Family Well-being

Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	■ Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to family well-being. ■ Incorporate goals related to family well-being into agency work plans and strategic planning. ■ Ensure staff members have appropriate training and supervision and manageable caseloads. ■ Develop relationships with community members and community organizations that support families' interests and needs. ■ Promote cross-service area teamwork. ■ Contract or hire a mental health consultant with appropriate credentials and experience to be a resource for staff and program needs around family well-being.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	■ Use the community assessment and self assessment surveys, the family partnership process, team meetings, and other tools to understand community and family needs and interests. ■ Review individual and system-wide family successes, helpful referrals and effective staff practices to evaluate family services. ■ Collect data for individual families and aggregate it so that programs can review the effectiveness of family services.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	■ Develop knowledge of relationship building that is grounded in cross-cultural responsiveness and strengths-based perspectives. ■ Gain knowledge about mental health, child development and a variety of parenting practices, including unique ways to engage fathers. ■ Develop knowledge and skill in supporting families around financial literacy and financial stability. ■ Reflect on daily practice and personal experience to increase self awareness and effective relationship–building with families. ■ Develop knowledge of professional ethics around confidentiality, boundaries and self-determination. ■ Develop skill in coordination and collaboration with community partners.
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Welcome all families—and all family structures, sizes and arrangements. ■ Initiate relationships with families that are receptive, responsive and respectful. ■ Include family-friendly spaces with pictures and materials that affirm and welcome all families. ■ Engage in honest dialogue with families about their expectations and staff/program objectives.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Use family partnership assessments as a tool for relationship building and as a basis for ongoing individualized family services. ■ Help families identify their interests, articulate their strengths and needs and accomplish and/or develop goals. ■ Use goal-oriented home visits to establish relationships with families and to identify and support their interests and needs through the family partnership process. ■ Assist families in using resources and systems of support regularly and continuously over a period of time.
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Participate in cross-service area teams and program meetings to ensure that information about services related to family and child well-being can inform teaching.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Link families with support systems and resources and conduct purposeful follow up to determine their effectiveness. ■ Participate in community meetings and initiatives that increase program capacity to respond to the needs and interests of families.

1. Family Well-being *(continued)*

Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Have considered the benefits of participating in different program services and/or activities.
- Developed relationships with staff that are helpful in supporting the goals they have established for themselves and their children.
- Identified their individual family strengths to cope with difficulties and overcome adversity.
- Gained confidence to address any family specific needs and/or interests related to:
  - Safety
  - Housing stability
  - Health and mental health
  - Employment and job skills development
  - Budget and finances, financial literacy
  - Safety
- Accessed resources and systems of support that meet family interests, needs and goals.

2. Positive Parent-child Relationships

Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	▪ Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to supporting positive parent-child relationships. ▪ Incorporate goals related to positive parent-child relationships into agency work plans and strategic planning. ▪ Ensure staff members have appropriate training, effective supervision, and manageable caseloads to support families and their relationships with their infants, toddlers and preschool age children. ▪ Promote cross-service area teamwork.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	▪ Use self assessments, related surveys and ongoing conversations with families to reflect on staff relationships with families and identify areas for improvement. ▪ Use self assessments and related surveys to better understand participants' parenting practices, and use this information to improve parenting education and parenting supports.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	▪ Gain knowledge about: ◆ the needs of prenatal and postnatal pregnant women and their families; ◆ the needs of parents who are parenting a child with a disability; ◆ unique ways to engage fathers; ◆ how mental health and wellness affects families; ◆ communication styles and relationship building; ◆ child development; ◆ the effect of trauma on parent-child relationships; and ◆ a variety of parenting practices.

2. Positive Parent-child Relationships *(continued)*

Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Hold the child and family in high regard and partner effectively with different groups of parents. ■ Provide opportunities that support parents' needs to connect with other parents for reflection, information, ideas and support. ■ Support parent-child relationships in a way that values the culture and language of the family and recognizes how different cultural influences may influence family development.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Provide opportunities for parents to learn about expectant parenting and prenatal health, the developing role of young parents (for adolescent parents), and/or about their roles as new mothers and fathers. ■ Foster meaningful, reciprocal relationships between mother and child, and father and child in a manner that is both culturally receptive and responsive. ■ Help families identify appropriate practices that complement the stages of their developing child. ■ Support parents and families in ensuring the health and safety of their infants, toddlers and preschoolers. ■ Support a father's efforts to connect with and be responsible for his child at all ages and stages of development. ■ Support families in seeking support from mental health consultants or other community agencies when there are parent-child relationship challenges that require additional services. ■ Foster strong co-parenting relationships as appropriate.
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Engage with parents as equal partners in learning about their child while acknowledging parents' premier role as their child's first teacher. ■ Foster meaningful, reciprocal relationships between mother and child, and father and child in a manner that is both culturally receptive and responsive. ■ Talk together with families about the child's signals in ways that help families explore these signals and understand and respond to their child's behavior. ■ Work together with families to help children overcome behavioral challenges.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Engage community partners to help support the needs and goals of pregnant and expectant families and new parents. ■ Engage community partners to help support the needs of families who are parenting during stressful and challenging times.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Gained knowledge and experience around expectant parenting and prenatal health, the developing role of young parents (for adolescent parents), and/or about their roles as new mothers and fathers.
- Learned new ways to ensure the health and safety of their developing child.
- Gained knowledge about their children's social, emotional and cognitive development in the context of community and culture.
- Learned new ways to understand and respond to their child's behavior.
- Used positive parenting practices—such as attachment and nurturing relationships—that complement the stages of their child's development.
- Reflected on parenting experiences, practices and new strategies.

3. Families as Lifelong Educators

Parents and families observe, guide, promote and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	■ Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development and continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to families as lifelong educators. ■ Incorporate goals related to families as lifelong educators into agency work plans and strategic planning. ■ Collaborate with school systems to support and empower families in their continued role as their child's lifelong educators. ■ Promote cross-service area teamwork.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	■ Use self assessments, related surveys and staff service integration meetings to better understand the effectiveness of family-staff relationships with respect to teaching and learning. ■ Use information from the self assessment and related surveys to improve staff-family relationships and to strengthen family literacy practices.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	■ Include teachers/teachers' assistants in parenting education sessions so parents and teachers can share information about child learning and development, and program curriculum.
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Welcome families to observe and participate in their child's classroom (or home-based) activities. ■ Support and encourage parents to share tips on everyday learning practices with staff and other families.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Support relationships between parents and their children as part of the foundation for interactions around early learning. ■ Provide opportunities and support parents in working toward their own literacy goals.
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Consistently connect with families to gather child information and parent observations to inform teaching. ■ Share information about children's social, emotional, and cognitive development and the importance of the home language (with families of children who are dual language learners). ■ Share information about approaches that promote child outcomes outlined in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. ■ Engage parents in conversations where child assessment data is shared and parents learn about children's progress. ■ Use a database/management information system that is accessible to families and that assists teachers in sharing child assessment information in an understandable, family-friendly format.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Support family experiences with community resources that support children's learning and development, such as libraries and museums. ■ Share information with families about resources and services for children with disabilities.

3. Families as Lifelong Educators *(continued)*

Parents and families observe, guide, promote and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Shared their knowledge of their children with program and teaching staff to inform teaching and learning.
- Identified their talents and strengths as parents and educators of their children.
- Enjoyed and celebrated their child's learning and developmental accomplishments.
- Learned more about the social-emotional development of their infants and toddlers.
- Learned about the value of the primary language for children's development and long-term academic success (for parents of dual language learners).
- Partnered with teachers/assistant teachers and used different approaches in the program, home and/or community that supported the essential learning outlined in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- Learned about options for acquiring services and supports for their child's learning, developmental, or behavioral challenges.
- Gained confidence and competence in voicing, acting on, and achieving lifelong learning goals for their children.

4. Families as Learners

Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	■ Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to families learning goals for themselves and their children. ■ Incorporate goals related to family learning into agency work plans and strategic planning. ■ Form agreements with education entities and organizations that support staff and families' education and training goals.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	■ Use community assessments, self assessments, family partnership agreements and related surveys on education and training services in the program and community to understand opportunities and challenges. ■ Use information from community assessments, self assessments and related surveys to improve family options for GED, training, certificate, and degree programs.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	■ Create "learning communities" for staff. ■ Develop staff skills to support families in meeting their learning goals. ■ Develop knowledge about different kinds of education and training opportunities available to families. ■ Prepare staff to engage parents in meaningful and creative ways in parent meetings and trainings.

4. Families as Learners *(continued)*

Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Welcome and support families as learners. ■ Make information available that supports parents' personal growth and career development. ■ Ensure that parent meetings and trainings are announced routinely, that announcements are inviting, and that language is not a barrier to parent participation. ■ Provide opportunities for families to connect with other families in the program or community that are working to achieve similar learning/educational goals.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Use the family partnership process to assist families with their education and training goals, and provide referrals to educational resources (GED, adult education, ESL, employment opportunities, workplace literacy, parenting skills, job training, job preparation skills, etc). ■ Follow-up on referrals to ensure that families are enrolled and have the necessary supports to complete their education and/or training. ■ Invite past program parents and community volunteers to share their educational and career experiences with families. ■ Invite families to volunteer or apply for jobs in the program in ways that support their parenting, career or life goals.
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Support parents as learners in parenting education programs that help parents learn more about their child's learning, development and behavior. ■ Support family literacy activities between parents and children. ■ Encourage families to observe and participate in child learning and development during home visits and in classrooms.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Link families to community resources for internships, volunteer activities and other experiences that expand their knowledge and skills and build on their career interests. ■ Form partnerships with educational resources in the community and beyond, including higher education institutions, to support families' learning interests and educational goals. ■ Form partnerships with adult educators who creatively enhance education and training opportunities for families.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Identified their strengths as learners, and reflected on their parenting, career and life interests.
- Learned about experiences, training and educational opportunities that relate to their interests.
- Set learning goals that aligned with their interests and career aspirations.
- Enrolled in courses or training programs that led toward GED, certifications and/or other degrees.
- Participated in learning experiences that supported their parenting, career or life goals.
- Considered goals related to volunteer and employment options with Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

5. Family Engagement in Transitions

Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to Kindergarten through Elementary School.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	■ Ensure that systems, supports and resources are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement and partnerships related to child and family transitions. ■ Establish ongoing communications and Memorandas of Understanding between Head Start and the local educational agencies.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	■ Use the self assessment process, related surveys and K-12 data sources (where possible) to review transition activities and to better understand opportunities and challenges. ■ Use information from the self assessment, related surveys and other data sources to improve transition practices with families and community partners.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	■ Conduct joint transition trainings across EHS/HS and local educational agencies. ■ Gain understanding about the realities public schools face and acknowledge both constraints and opportunities in building local partnerships (differences in policy, regulations, budgets, organizational design, etc).
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Welcome and engage families as partners in transition planning. ■ Create a culture of supporting families during transitions as they are the key to creating continuity for children. ■ Help families identify and understand quality criteria in early childhood settings as children make transitions from prenatal to postnatal services, new service options, new classrooms, or new home visitors.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Use the family partnership process to help families develop transition plans for themselves and their children. ■ Provide families with information, training and connections to future early care and educational settings to help facilitate the transition process for parents and children (e.g., information about what families might expect of K-12 instruction and training about how to deal with disagreements between parent and teacher). ■ Ensure families know about their rights under federal and state laws, such as their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Ensure families have ongoing opportunities to discuss their observations and concerns about their child's strengths and challenges prior to transitions from EHS to HS and HS to K-12. ■ Share information about activities and everyday interactions with children that promote school readiness as outlined by the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. ■ Ensure families have ongoing opportunities to discuss child assessment data so that families are prepared to initiate and/or participate in similar discussions with teachers in K-12. ■ Provide families with information about child development and the impact of transitions on children across early childhood and school settings.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Coordinate services for children and families leaving Head Start through program-school partnerships. ■ Provide advocacy training and opportunities for families to develop and use advocacy skills in the context of their child's lifelong learning.

5. Family Engagement in Transitions *(continued)*

Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to Kindergarten through Elementary School.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Gained understanding of the social and emotional impacts of transitions on children.
- Learned about their role in creating continuity for children as they transition into kindergarten.
- Learned about the culture, norms and opportunities of their child's future early care and education settings.
- Anticipated and recognized their child's adaptive needs as changes and transitions occurred in early childhood education and school settings.
- Learned about how everyday interactions with preschool children are opportunities to promote school readiness as outlined in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- Learned about their rights under federal and state laws, such as their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Built upon their strengths as program/school advocates through participation in program supported transition activities.
- Accessed information about existing local parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks, and parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to continue engagement in new settings.

6. Family Connections to Peers and Community

Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	▪ Ensure that systems and staff development facilitate opportunities for parents to develop relationships with their peers through meetings, trainings, support groups, mentoring programs or community referrals. ▪ Incorporate goals related to family connections to peers and community into agency work plans and strategic planning.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	▪ Use the community assessment, self assessments, related surveys and ongoing relationships with families to understand the opportunities and challenges related to parent connections, peers, and community. ▪ Use information from community assessment, self assessments and related surveys to improve practices related to parent connections, peers and community.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	▪ Conduct staff training on facilitating peer activities that help parents and families: ◆ enhance parent-child relationships; ◆ strengthen their role as educators; ◆ reflect and set learning goals; ◆ learn about transitions; and ◆ encourage parent leadership and advocacy.

6. Family Connections to Peers and Community *(continued)*

Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Create safe and respectful environments where parents can lead and learn from each other and ask for the kinds of information that they find helpful as individuals and members of a group. ■ Provide space and resources, if necessary, for monthly events chaired by parents, for parents.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Facilitate (or refer parents to) parental support and/or educational groups where they can share their concerns (e.g. children's special needs). ■ Talk with parents about the formal and informal social networks (support, amusement, help, education, etc) they have and explore interests or needs in forming new (or renewed) social connections. ■ Individualize opportunities for peer-to-peer connections for different groups of parents (e.g., fathers or grandparents). ■ Support parents interests and goals with skill-building volunteer opportunities in the program and community.
TEACHING AND LEARNING	■ Encourage parent-to-parent support when participating in parent meetings about children's learning and development.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Collaborate with community organizations that share parents' concerns and interests. ■ Link families with meaningful support networks, peer-to-peer groups, and volunteer opportunities in the community.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Connected with other parents and families to exchange knowledge and resources.
- Engaged in problem-solving and decision-making with staff, parents and families.
- Experienced the personal value of relationships, connections and experiences in the program and community.
- Developed a sense of self-efficacy through parent-to-parent experiences that support mothers, fathers, and other parenting caregivers in their relationships with one another.
- Gained a sense of empowerment through the validation that comes with peer-to-peer shared experiences.
- Volunteered in the program or in other community-based organizations.

7. Families as Advocates and Leaders

Families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	■ Ensure that parents' opinions are heard and included in the program planning processes (e.g., policy council and parent committees, etc.). ■ Ensure that systems and supports are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to engaging families as advocates and leaders. ■ Incorporate goals related to family advocacy and leadership into agency work plans and strategic planning.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	■ Conduct regular assessments on parent leadership and advocacy experiences to understand opportunities and challenges. ■ Use related assessment data to improve practices related to parent leadership and advocacy.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	■ Provide training on the multicultural principles, leadership development, and advocacy for staff and families.
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	■ Create an environment that welcomes and affirms parent leadership and advocacy in the program. ■ Work with parents to arrive at agreed upon understandings of how to partner and how to collaborate with each other within the program.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Provide opportunities for parents to identify their strengths as leaders/advocates and to use them in the program and community. ■ Share information with families about existing parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks and/or parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to foster continuity in leadership and advocacy roles beyond Head Start.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	■ Provide parent mentoring opportunities that could include staff, alumni parents/families, elders, and professionals in the community to serve as a resource and support for parent leadership development. ■ Partner with parents to engage advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family and community needs. ■ Form partnerships with parent-to-parent organizations or other K-12 parent groups to facilitate connections for HS/EHS families.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Learned about their opportunities to engage in leadership and /or advocacy activities (eg. policy council).
- Built upon their strengths as leaders and/or advocates through parent-initiated participation in program-supported activities such as advocacy and leadership trainings, parent committees, policy councils, etc.
- Accessed information about existing parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks and/or parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to continue to be leaders/advocates in the community and as their children transition into kindergarten.

THE PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: SUMMARY AND USES

Regardless of the particular strategies that programs and families choose, the necessary ingredients for program success must include a commitment toward goal-directed, positive, culturally responsive and respectful relationships with families and a system-wide, integrated, and comprehensive parent, family, and community engagement approach.

The PFCE framework can be used in program-wide strategic planning, program design and management, continuous improvement systems, professional development for staff and governing bodies, and program approaches to providing services. It can be used to inform community partners about Head Start parent and family engagement goals and the importance of those goals for school readiness. It lays the groundwork for the development of future parent and family engagement training and technical assistance materials for Head Start and Early Head Start programs that will be made available through the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. ■

APPENDIX

RELATED ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH TO SUPPORT THE PFCE FRAMEWORK

Over the last decade, an important body of research in several fields makes the case for a systemic approach to interventions for children and families. This approach seeks to change several important elements in the way a program or organization works. Findings from the research suggest that programs with strong leadership and a supportive work environment create the conditions for effective staff practices and relationships with children and families. Effective programs do not operate in isolation. They depend on the support and resources of their communities in order to achieve the desired outcomes for children and families. Like an orchestra, several instruments of change must work together to produce the desired result.

RELATED PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH

The body of research that focuses on parent and family engagement as key contributors to family well-being and child success has grown significantly since the creation of Head Start in 1965. In order to highlight the significance of this research across the seven family engagement outcomes, the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE) will be developing a series of materials that describe this multidisciplinary research base and its implications for implementing system wide practices that are considered evidence-based, evidence-informed, or best practices. In addition, the research support for building parent and family engagement and community partnerships that enhance children's early learning and developmental outcomes will be part of the NCPFCE program readiness guide for parent, family, and community engagement.