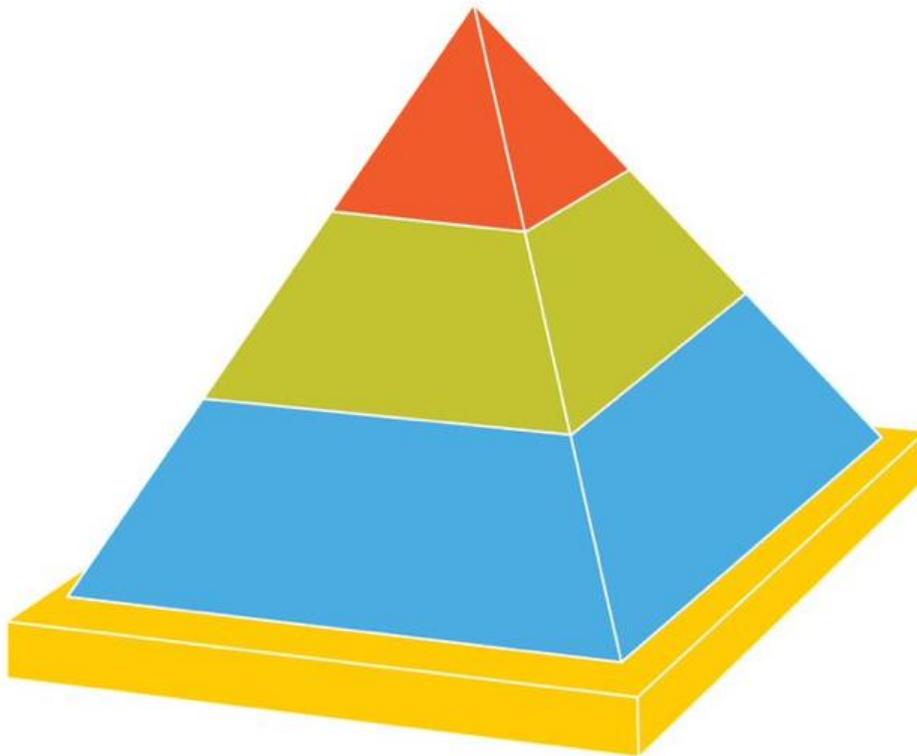# WORKBOOK

Creating Family Engagement Plans

Table of Contents

What is Family Engagement?

Family engagement is the process we use to build positive, responsive relationships with families. It is mutually respectful, responsive to family's cultures and languages, and includes genuine efforts to understand each family's beliefs, values, and priorities. Effective family engagement involves parents and professionals working together toward the goals that families choose for themselves and their children.[1]

Why is Family Engagement Important?

Families are children's first teachers, advocates, and nurturers. When families and the programs where children learn, work together and support each other in their respective roles, children experience better outcomes.[2] "Families know their children in ways that no one else can. This particular knowledge of the child has roots in family, social, and cultural practices and traditions…When you value family connections and contributions, you are more likely to engage with families."[3]

At every tier of the Pyramid Model, early childhood educators and early learning programs should consider what strategies might be used to:
- *welcome and support diverse families;*
- *create opportunities to learn from families;*
- *strategies for partnering with families to promote child outcomes; and*
- *providing the supports that families might need to promote their child's skill development.[4]*

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is to guide your Leadership Team in the process of developing a Family Engagement Plan for your early learning and child care program. The process encourages you to view the Pyramid Model through the lens of family engagement. Choose one of four Intentions that your centre would like to focus on and create goals for your team to work on. Based on your centre's capacity, there is flexibility in various steps to work specifically as a Leadership Team (Option A) or include educators (Option B). The outcome is the development of a family engagement plan. The Family Engagement Plan Flowchart below provides an overview of the steps to follow and a suggested timeframe (over days or weeks) for each step that your centre can modify.

Family Engagement Plan Flowchart

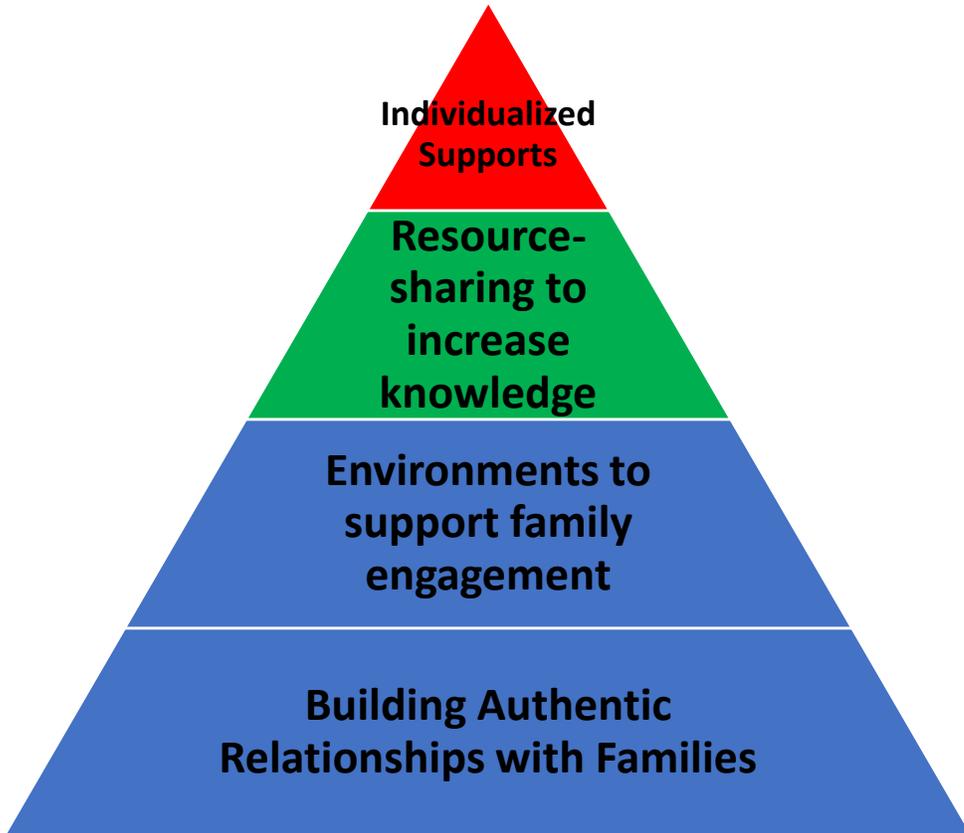**1** → Family Engagement Intention selection*

2 ↳ A. Leadership Team to read and rate Intentions* **OR** B. Leadership Team & Educators read and rate Intentions*

3 ↳ Leadership Team to:
-choose Intention
-identify Knowledge & Assumptions
-gather Research*

4 ↳ A. Leadership Team to Brainstorm together* **OR** B. Leadership Team & Educators Brainstorm at staff meeting*

5 ↳ Leadership Team to write Program Wide Implementation Goal and Action Steps*

6 ↳ A. Leadership Team to collaborate the Goal and Steps with educators* **AND** B. Leadership Team to share Goal and Steps with families and community*

7 ↳ Leadership Team to Review Steps in Family Engagement Plan*

Potential Coach Support:

Help team understand & plan for FE

Provide resources & assist with research

Guide writing goal/steps

Implement, review & monitor goal

Suggested Timeframe for Each Step:

Step 1 - 15 min

Step 2 – 20 min

Step 3 – 30-45 min

Step 4 – 20 min

Step 5 – 20 min

Step 6 – 20 min

Step 7 – 20 min

Pyramid Model using a Family Engagement Lens

When choosing an Intention, let's consider the main focus of each level of the Pyramid Model through the lens of family engagement.

➢ We start with the universal levels of building relationships and ensuring our environment is both reflective and supportive of the families in the centre.

➢ At the targeted level, we begin sharing specific social emotional resources to fit family needs and classroom priorities.

➢ Finally, at the individual support level, we begin planning for ways we can engage families during challenging situations, as well as strategies for having sensitive conversations with families.

Individualized Supports

Resource-sharing to increase knowledge

Environments to support family engagement

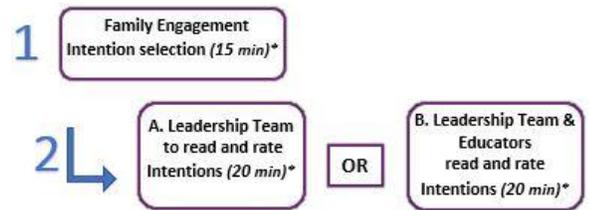Building Authentic Relationships with Families

Now it's time to choose an Intention that your team feels motivated to work towards in supporting the families in your program.

4

On the following pages are some Intentions your Leadership Team will read, rate and reflect on (with or without involving other educators).

	Family Engagement Intention selection *(15 min)**
1	

	A. Leadership Team to read and rate Intentions *(20 min)**	OR	B. Leadership Team & Educators read and rate Intentions *(20 min)**
2			

Select an Intention for Family Engagement

Universal Level

> ### Building Authentic Relationships with Families

Intention 1: The focus of this intention would be to deepen knowledge and strengthen practices for cultivating engaged, respectful and responsive partnerships with families that respect their strengths and cultural identities, and support family well-being.

- Family engagement relies on the idea of *doing with* families, rather than doing *to* or *for* them.
    - How does the program encourage mutual respect for the roles and strengths of both ECE's and families?
    - What are the daily practices that foster compassion, empathy, and active listening?
    - What are the ways that the program gathers and responds to family feedback?

Families know their children in ways that no one else can. This particular knowledge of the child has roots in family, social, and cultural practices and traditions. (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p. 51)

It is the quality of the relationships between educators, children, and families that characterizes the early childhood community experience for families (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p. 50)

Rate Intention 1 below:

	Least				Most
Instinctively, how excited are you about this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
What potential for impact in your program does this intention have?	1	2	3	4	5
How feasible is it to tackle this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
	Total:				

Universal Level

Environments to Support Family Engagement

Intention 2: The focus of this intention is to consider how the environments in your program support and welcome families to engage: with their children, with educators, and with other families. Consider developing or deepening any knowledge, skills, and practices that might increase your program's ability to support this work.

- How is the program set up to make it comfortable and natural for families to spend time with the program outside of pick up and drop off?
- Does the environment support more than the functional aspects of these routines?
- Where do families see themselves reflected in the spaces of the program, particularly their varied cultural backgrounds and traditions?
- What are the ways the program makes it enticing and joyful for parents to participate in the program?

How does the environment communicate value for each family's social and cultural practices and traditions? In what ways are family, social, and cultural practices and traditions reflected in routines of the day... in the child's play and learning materials? (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p 68)

Children's documented play and learning endeavours can be used to engage children, families, and educators in meaningful conversations. (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p. 65)

Rate Intention 2 below:

	Least				Most
Instinctively, how excited are you about this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
What potential for impact in your program does this intention have?	1	2	3	4	5
How feasible is it to tackle this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
	Total:				

Targeted Level

<div align="center">

Resource-Sharing to Increase Knowledge

</div>

Intention 3: The focus of this intention is to build explicit, purposeful knowledge-sharing practices with families regarding social and emotional development information and practices. How might you share knowledge in respectful and empowering ways that take into account the family's existing knowledge and connections, and invite them to greater participation with other resources?

- By engaging families as partners and valuing their important role in their child's well-being we can increase the likelihood of families bringing practices into their homes.
- We can also increase the likelihood that families will share their knowledge, connections, and practices with us so that we can build a community of knowledge-sharing.
- Early learning and childcare programs are part of larger community networks of support.
    - What resources are available in your community?
    - What networks might families be connected with that could support your early learning community?

How do your decisions, participation, and communicative practices invite children, their families, and friends to become active participants within this community? (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p 68)

Rate Intention 3 below:

	Least				Most
Instinctively, how excited are you about this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
What potential for impact in your program does this intention have?	1	2	3	4	5
How feasible is it to tackle this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
	Total:				

Individualized Level

Intention 4: The focus of this intention invites you to consider what knowledge, skills and practices you might need to develop or deepen to increase your program's ability to respond when there are concerns about children, or relationships with families are challenged.

- At times we will be called upon to remain connected to children and families that we struggle to support.
    - We may have to initiate a conversation with a family about a child's behavior, or concerns we have about their development.
    - A family may be experiencing a crisis or trauma and need our support.
    - We may be having trouble connecting with a family and beginning to feel frustrated about their participation.
- These situations challenge us to find ways to authentically individualize our family engagement strategies to meet these families where they are at.

Co-imagining possibilities may require taking risks and facing challenges within the spirit of learning, for example, experimenting with new care routines and/or play and learning experiences to support children and families in meaningful ways that are safe, caring, and honouring of the many ways children and adults participate together. (Makovichuk, et.al., 2014, p. 59)

Rate Intention 4 below:

	Least				Most
Instinctively, how excited are you about this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
What potential for impact in your program does this intention have?	1	2	3	4	5
How feasible is it to tackle this intention?	1	2	3	4	5
	Total:				

Choose Your Family Engagement Intention

Using the ratings from the Intentions on the previous pages to guide you through the decision-making process. It is time for your team to identify an Intention to choose. Together, reflect on:

- The strengths among your team members
- The time available to complete the intention
- The resources you have available
- Which intention resonates with most team members?

Decision Time: choose a single shared Intention

Knowledge and Assumptions

From the Intention you've chosen, as the Leadership Team identify what you already know about it. [1] Spend approximately 10 minutes answering the following questions and 10 minutes discussing your answers.

- **What aspects of the Intention do you know a lot about?**

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Effective problem-solving involves both identifying our assumptions and creative thinking. What are your assumptions about this Intention?**

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **What aspects of the Intention do you need to learn more about? What don't you know?**

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

Gathering Information

How can we learn more about the Intention chosen?

1. **With a quick search, identify 2-3 resources relevant to the Intention and aspects you need more information about.** [1] Examples of where they can be found include web resources, books, professional learning opportunities, other program Directors.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. **Once a few resources have been identified, reach out to your Coach for support and other community members who have knowledge and experience in this area.**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Possible Starting Points:

National Centre for Pyramid Model Innovations – Family Engagement Resources
https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html

National Association for the Education of Young Children
https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/family-engagement

Canadian Child Care Federation- Resource Topics
https://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/topics/

Centre on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning – Family Resources
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Centre: Frameworks for Family and Community Engagement – Use Topics tab on top menu
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/

Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework
www.flightframework.ca

Brainstorm
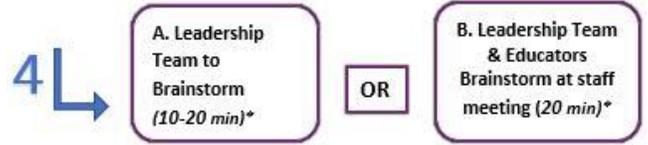
Use Appendix A (Possible Inspirations) to gather reflection questions related to your Intention. Use these to inspire your brainstorming session!
Come up with as many ways as possible to get to where you want to be: What could you do? Who could be involved? What would it look like? What have others done?

**Guide for
Brainstorming**

1. **Gather materials like post-it notes, paper, pens and markers**

2. **Consider writing the Intention on a big piece of chart paper (and have enough room to display your ideas)**

3. **Write your Intention questions large and clear (if in group)**

4. **Get EXCITED!!!**

5. **Gather around the wall or table**

6. **Start the clock!**

7. **Take 10 min. to write down ideas**

8. **Look for common themes or put similar ideas together**

9. **Decide on best ideas in silence so that they are not swayed by other team members**

10. **Decide on the top three by reflecting and discussing the following points:**

- *How excited is everyone about this idea?*

- *How innovative and different from what the centre has been doing does this idea feel?*

- *How practical and realistic to implement is this idea?*

11. **If you unable to implement all three, narrow down your selection to one or two.**

Remember the Brainstorming Rules
➢ Defer Judgement
➢ Encourage wild ideas
➢ Build on the ideas of others
➢ Stay focused on topic
➢ One conversation at a time
➢ Be visual
➢ Go for quantity

5 ⌐↳ Leadership Team to write
Program Wide Implementation
Goal and Action Steps (20 min)*

Program Wide Implementation (PWI) Goal

- Write down your idea as a goal on the PWI Action Plan (see page 17).
- Break down the goal into a series of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely steps (answering who, what, where, when, why and how).
- Once a few steps have been identified, think about who will be responsible for completing that step and by when.
- Will more research be required as part of your goal?
- How can families have a role in the goal being implemented?
- How can educators and other staff be involved in making this goal happen? Are there Action Steps that they can take responsibility for or participate in?

_____

_____

_____

Centre: _____ Team members: _____ Date: _____

Program Wide Implementation Action Plan

Our Vision Statement for PWI:

*The goal we will work on (goals should answer what, who, where, when and how):	We will know this goal has been achieved when:			
Steps to achieve this goal:	**Resources needed:** *(e.g. coach support, video recording, materials, etc.)*	**Who?**	**Timeline**	**Completed**
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
Review Date: _____				Adapted from: Snyder, P., et al. (2009)

Sharing Goals and Steps

6 → | A. Leadership Team to collaborate the Goal and Steps with educators* | AND | B. Leadership Team to share Goal and Steps with families and community* |

1. How will you share the Program Wide (PWI) Goal with educators? For example, during a staff meeting, in room teams, in an email, on the notice board, etc. [2]

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Share the PWI Goal with families and other team members. What can they expect to see as you work through this goal? What might they be asked to participate in?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Share the PWI Goal with other members of your early childhood community. For example, Pedagogical Partners, other programs children attend, Inclusive Child Care, other centre directors…

   _____

   _____

   _____

Checking Your Progress

Choose a date to review your goal and the steps that have been completed. The Leadership Team can ask the following questions:
1. Has this step been completed?
   (a) If yes, CELEBRATE!
   (b) Discuss how the plan went. How does this step contribute to your goals? What were the outcomes?
   (c) Continue onto next step until they are completed.

2. If not yet, what is getting in the way? How can you address that barrier?
   (a) How can you modify this step to be more effective?
   (b) Assign a new date to complete the revised step.

As you have gone through the process in the workbook, we hope that you have been able to reflect on your relationships with families and the importance of strengthening that connection in the vital work that you do.

References

1. adapted from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement
2. n.a. (2020) *First steps to success in Etobicoke: Final report companion guide.* Prepared by the Provincial System Support Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
3. Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirete, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework. Retrieved from flightframework.ca
4. Fox, L. & Swett, J. (2017). Implementing partnerships with families to promote the social and emotional competence of young children. In Weist, M. D. Weist, S.A. Garbacz, K. L. Lane, & D. Kincaid, D. (Eds). *Aligning and integrating family engagement in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Concepts and strategies for families and schools in key contexts* (pp. 84-97). Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press.
https://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/Family%20Engagement%20in%20PBIS.pdf

Program Wide Implementation Action Plan

Centre: _____   Team members: _____   Date: _____

Our Vision Statement for PWI:

*The goal we will work on (goals should answer what, who, where, when and how):

We will know this goal has been achieved when:

Steps to achieve this goal:	Resources needed: *(e.g. coach support, video recording, materials, etc.)*	Who?	Timeline	Completed
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Review Date: _____

Appendix A

Possible Inspirations

Intention 1

- Intentionally and authentically connecting with families to strengthen our relationship (see TPOT Item Connecting with Families / TPITOS Item Communicating with Families and Promoting Family Involvement in the Classroom)
- How might we enhance our knowledge of family cultures and experiences through active listening and collaborative conversations?

Intention 2

- Creating spaces to help families feel welcome
- Documenting: using learning to spark engagement
- Authentic cultural representation: How might we increase our understanding of cultural awareness to support families (represented in our program)?
- How can our families join us and be partners in learning?

Intention 3

- Sharing resources for families to understand and implement classroom practices
- Connecting with community resources that support parenting practices and early childhood development
- Enhancing family knowledge of social and emotional development
- Fostering family's understanding and valuing of Pyramid Model practices
- How can we learn what communities the families are already part of and what resources or supports these communities can offer?

Intention 4

- Learning about having sensitive conversations with families
- Discovering ways to connect with families we feel are hard-to-reach
- Building awareness of basic need or emergency support resources for families experiencing crisis or trauma
- Becoming trauma-informed
- Building awareness of resources to support families of children with disabilities.
- How might we develop/deepen knowledge, skills, practices and processes for supporting children with diverse learning needs in the program?