

Partnering with Families

The importance of strong home – school partnerships is recognized by both teachers and families and well-documented in the literature. For example, research has shown that children whose families are engaged in their schooling have more positive attitudes toward schools and perform better academically, a finding that is consistent across all income and education levels, as well as across cultural backgrounds (Allen & Tracey, 2004). Families who feel good about the relationship with their child’s school hold higher expectations for their child. When school personnel actively reach out to families and honor their contributions, relationships between home and school are strengthened (Iruka & Barbarin, 2009; Mapp, 2003). Finding ways to connect with families gives teachers the opportunity to learn about the child and better plan appropriate educational experiences, while helping families learn about their child in school and understand ways they can support their child at home.

In an effort to support development of these relationships, the K-3 formative assessment process includes a family component designed to help teachers learn from families about the unique strengths and needs of each child in their classroom. Questions have been designed to gather information from families about their child that will help teachers meet the child’s needs. Ideally these questions would be used during a face-to-face conversation conducted as part of a home visit before the beginning of school. A personal phone call might also be used if face-to-face meetings present challenges. Teachers may want to use these questions in a survey sent home electronically or completed during a face-to-face meeting, such as Kindergarten Orientation of Open House. The questions could also be incorporated into existing interview processes or family questionnaires as well. Whatever method is used, the goal is to use these questions as a starting point for an ongoing conversation between home and school.

Allen, S. F., & Tracy, E. M. (2004). Revitalizing the role of home visiting by school social workers. *Children & Schools*, 26(4), 197–208.

Iruka, I. U., & Barbarin, O. (2009). African American children’s early learning and development: Examining parenting, schools, and neighborhood. In H. A. Neville, B. M. Tynes, & S. O. Utsey (Eds.), *Handbook of African American Psychology* (pp. 175–184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mapp, K. (2003). Having their say: Parents describe why and how they are engaged in their children’s

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Questions for Kindergarten Entry

What is your child most excited about learning?

How does your child typically approach new things, such as meeting new people or going to new places? How do you help your child prepare for new experiences?

What new things would you like your child to learn? Why are these important to you?

How does your child show emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, surprise, frustration, etc.)? How do you respond? (e.g., when they show happiness ...frustration)?

What does your child like to do at home or with family and friends? (e.g., favorite games, books, toys, activities)

What can we do to help your child learn his/her best?