

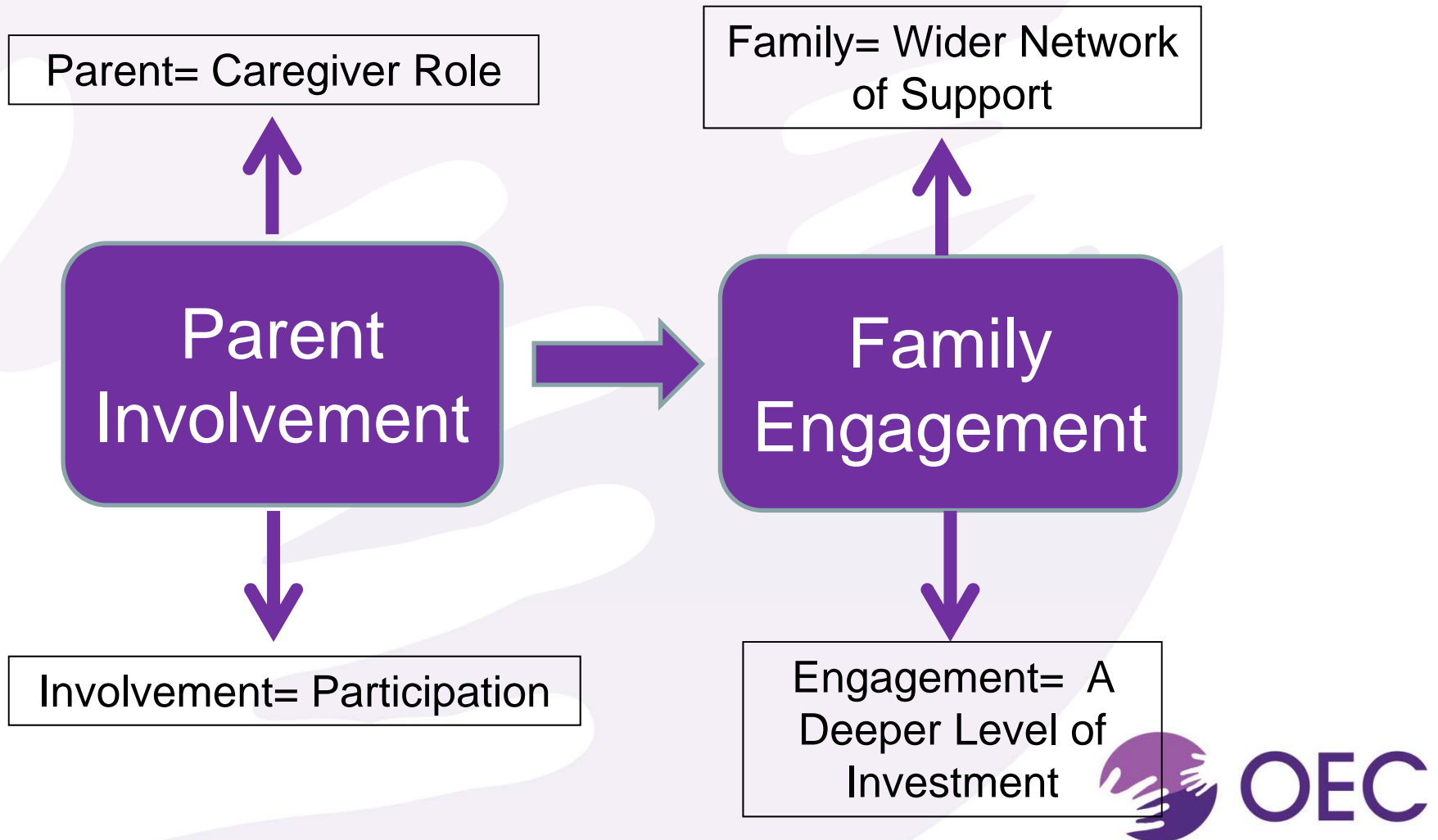


**OEC**

**Connecticut Office of Early Childhood**

**Partnering to Promote  
Learning and Development:  
Using the CT ELDS with Families**

# From Parent Involvement to Family Engagement



# What Does Research Tell us About Family Engagement?

- Parent involvement/family engagement is linked to **improved social and academic outcomes for children** (Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Seking, 2004; Jeynes, 2012)
- Higher levels of trust are correlated with improved outcomes (Adams & Christenson, 2000)
- **Role construction, efficacy and perceptions of teacher invitations** influence parent's involvement decisions (Reed, Jones, Walks, and Hoover-Demsey, 2000)



# What Does Research Tell us About Family Engagement?

- While history influences engagement, **student and teacher invitations and school climate** are bigger predictors of family engagement (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013)
- Practices become less family-centered as children get older (Dunst, 2002)
- Families' feelings of **self-efficacy** are a mediating factor in positive outcomes from family-centered care (Dunst & Trivette, 2009)

# What does this research mean for practice?

- Family Engagement makes a difference for children's outcomes!
- Program/school actions influence family engagement
- Building trust with families is important
- When families feel a sense of self-efficacy



# General Strategies to Support Family Engagement

- Involve families in making decisions and setting goals for their child.
- Engage families in two-way communication. Listen to their concerns and observations about their children
- Support families in providing learning activities at home and in the community in a manner that promotes self-efficacy



# General Strategies to Support Family Engagement

- Involve families in making program-level decisions and empower them to get involved in broader advocacy
- Support family engagement as a program-wide effort and philosophy

NAEYC Effective Family Engagement Principles  
(<https://www.naeyc.org/familyengagement>)



# Linking Engagement to Learning and Development

- Recent models of family engagement, including the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework* and the *Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework*, focus on linking family engagement to learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011)





# Talking with Families about Their Child's Learning and Development

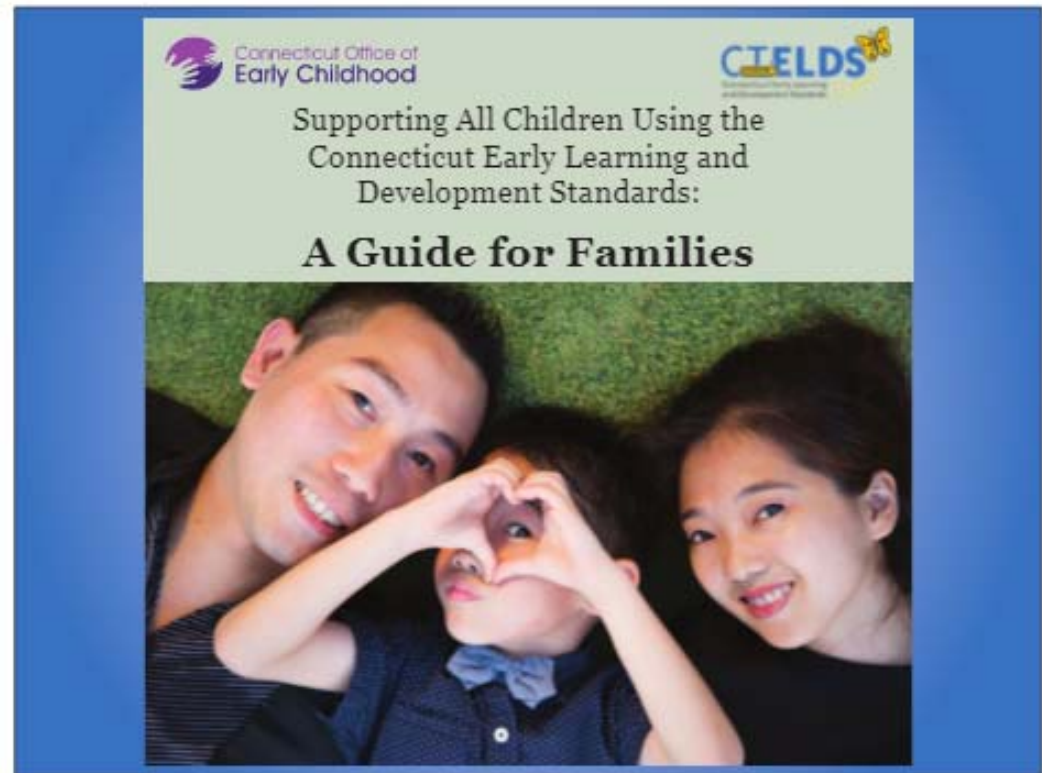
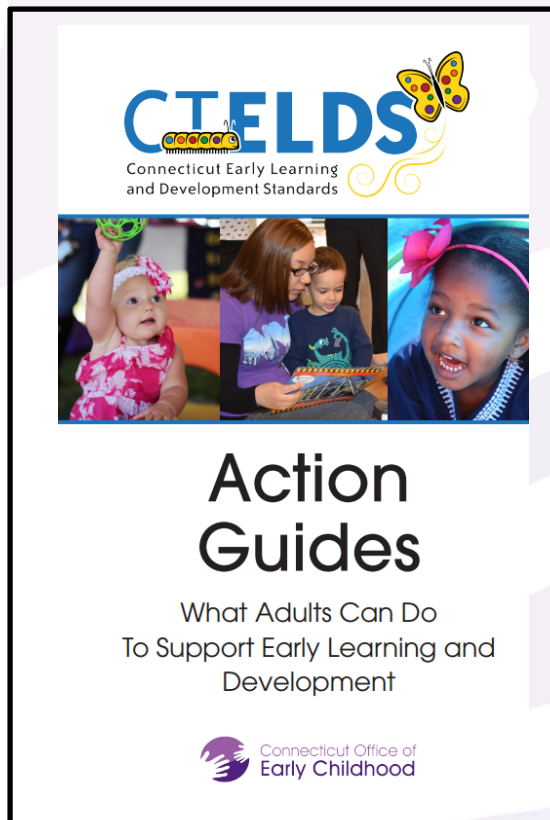
- Less research is available about the essence of these interactions. What we do know is that:
  - Strengths-based approaches work best
  - Family input is valuable and accurate
  - A focus on building trust and self-efficacy is important

# The CT ELDS

*Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards were developed to help families, communities and schools work together to support children's early learning and growth.*



# Documents to Facilitate Family Engagement



## Supporting Children’s Learning and Development During the Early Years



Children learn and develop through their strong relationships with their family. They also learn through their ongoing experiences. Rich learning experiences can happen anywhere — at home, on the bus, at the store or in the park. There are endless possibilities for experiences that children will learn from. It doesn’t take fancy toys, computer programs or classes for your child to learn. By interacting and talking with your child, they will learn as you go about your daily life. Below are some things to think about so you can continue to support your child’s learning and development throughout each day of their early years. If you take a little time to think about what your child is experiencing and learning throughout their day, you can expand on the ideas in these pages.

*Loving relationships give young children a sense of comfort, safety, confidence and encouragement. They teach young children how to form friendships, communicate emotions and deal with challenges. Strong, positive relationships also help children develop trust, empathy, compassion and a sense of right and wrong.*  
 (Zero to Three, 2010)

- **Build A Strong, Caring Relationship**

Young children learn through their relationships so building a strong relationship helps your child’s development. Part of a strong relationship is making sure children feel safe. Children feel safe when they are protected from harm. They also feel safe when adults help them learn to control their behavior, express emotions and comfort themselves. Another important part of building a strong relationship is talking and showing affection. When young children babble or talk, smile or reach out, return the gesture! Research has shown that the back and forth exchanges between young children and their caregivers are important for early brain development.

- **Use Daily Routines**

Smile, talk or play with your child during daily routines such as changing diapers, washing and eating. Other routines, such as cooking and cleaning, can be changed a little to actively involve your child. While they are helping they can learn and see new things. Involving your child can make it a learning experience and make it more fun for you!



## Cognition

### This area includes:

- Showing curiosity
- Making sense of the world
- Staying with something
- Working hard-to-solve problems

### Support your child's development by:

- Giving your child lots of chances to explore.
- Encouraging curiosity so they enjoy learning.
- Helping them figure out the answer to their own questions.
- Talking to them a lot, even if they don't understand everything you are saying yet.



## Social and Emotional Development

### This area includes:

- Building relationships
- Gaining an understanding of oneself
- Expressing feelings
- Learning how to play with other people

### Support your child's development by:

- Giving your baby lots of love, positive attention and praise helps them learn social and emotional skills. Responding when your child cries helps them learn about communicating.
- As they get older, helping them learn words for their feelings.
- Helping them learn ways to calm and be in control of themselves (e.g., quiet time or using a soothing object). Find time for them to play with other children.

## A FOCUS ON ...

6-12 months



During this time, babies explore and get excited when they make things happen. Relationships with family members continue to grow and babies may be getting to know and feel comfortable with others as well. Children at this age begin to have more control of their body and movements. They will want to play with new objects and try new actions. They will try to figure out what they can make happen with their body and voice. They may smile to get someone to smile back or might hold up their arms to show they want to be picked up.

### Things you might notice your child do at this age:

- Seek out familiar people and objects
- Show when they are happy, sad or mad with facial expressions
- Use gestures or sounds to show what they want
- Begin to use a couple of simple words or signs for people or familiar objects

### Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



#### **Bubble time:**

While you are washing dishes, make bubbles for your baby. Try to pop the bubbles together and say "pop!". Use words, such as "bubble" or "big".



#### **On the go with your child:**

Going on errands with a baby isn't always easy, but you can make the most of it by talking to your child about what you are doing. Keep him calm by giving him a favorite blanket, stuffed animal or a new object to hold while you finish errands.

## 6 TO 12 MONTHS



### **Mealtime and the outdoors:**

Take your baby on a picnic. Let him help pack the lunch and find a place to eat outside. You can sit on a blanket or a bench. Point out things you see – trees, cars, birds, bugs, flowers. If it's safe, let your baby enjoy crawling in the grass.



### **Cooking dinner:**

While cooking, give your baby a pan or pot lid to play with. She may see herself in the lid. She may bang it and pat it. If she loses interest, give her something new to explore and tell her the name of the items.

## How these activities support your baby's development:

### ■ **Cognition**

When you give your child new objects, they are able to explore and try new things. When you have a new experience with them, they see new sights, hear new sounds and learn about the world around them.

### ■ **Social and Emotional Development**

Interacting with your child while you are on the go helps them feel safe, secure and connected. Engaging them in what is happening around them helps them get used to new environments and to be interested with the world around them.

### ■ **Physical and Health Development**

Popping bubbles, playing with pots and pans and exploring during a picnic all give children a chance to develop their muscles and begin to control their movements.

### ■ **Early Language, Communication and Literacy**

Using new words when you are at home or on the go will help your child learn to understand and use more words. Using words with clear sounds, such as "pop," helps them learn to pay attention to the different sounds in words.

## A FOCUS ON ...

3-4 years



Children at this age are often on the move. They want to explore everything around them and ask a lot of questions. They are curious about everything around them. The number of questions can seem like a lot at times, but remember they are just trying to learn about their world. Give them as much information as you can, even though some of their questions may be hard to answer.

### Things you might notice your child doing at this age:

- Name some basic colors or use other words to describe objects (big, small, etc.)
- Understand the idea of same and different
- Say his or her name and age
- Answer simple questions
- Walk up and down stairs, alternating feet with one foot per step
- Kick, throw and catch a ball

### Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



#### Cooking:

Cooking with your child is a great time for bonding. You can really cook together or just pretend. Play along when your child offers you pretend food—ask what it is and talk about how it tastes. In the kitchen, your child can help with small tasks, such as setting or clearing the table. When you are cooking dinner, let your child help count or measure the ingredients, pour, mash, mix and spread different foods.



#### Going to the grocery store:

Make grocery shopping a fun experience for your child by giving him a shopping list of his own. Have him make simple drawings of food to use as a list. Give him a crayon to cross off items as he finds them in the store.



## 3 TO 4 YEARS



### Exploring nature:

Carefully look at things that you find in nature. Describe and explore the textures and colors of things, such as rocks, sticks and leaves. If you have pets, talk with your child about how you care for them and what they need to live and grow. Plants can also be a way to teach children about how things grow, but they take some time to grow. Help your child plant seeds that will sprout quickly, such as beans and peas. Talk about the difference between non-living objects (rocks and dirt) and living objects (plants and animals).



### Bedtime routines:

Your child may be able to do more for themselves than they could before, but bedtime routines are still a great time for learning. Sing songs that include new words or rhythms. Read books and talk about the pictures. Ask questions about the order in which you do things at night.

## How these activities support your child's development:

### ■ Cognition

When you make a shopping list and mark off items, children learn to plan and complete tasks in a fun way. By involving your child and observing what is around you as you go about your everyday life, you encourage curiosity and interest in the world.

### ■ Social and Emotional Development

Engaging your child in what you are doing helps continue building that strong, trusting relationship. When you talk to them about what is happening they learn to communicate with adults. When you teach them new skills they learn that you are a good source of information.

### ■ Language and Literacy

"Writing" a list with pictures helps children understand the reason for words and writing. The act of writing will also help them develop the motor skills for writing as they get older.

### ■ Mathematics

Helping your child to measure and count helps them to understand "how much?" They learn the order in which we say numbers and begin to understand that one number goes with one object when counting.

### ■ Science

When they explore nature, children learn to use different senses to learn about the things around them. They also learn how to ask questions. Learning about the differences between living and non-living things helps them think about some basic ideas of science.

### ■ Social Studies

By learning about the foods you eat and how they are prepared, your child begins to learn about their culture.

# What's Coming Next? Further Resources to Support Family Engagement

- The development of an assessment based upon the CT ELDS is underway
- Family input is planned as an integral part of the assessment process
- Work will be done to ensure that reporting of information from the assessment will be done in a manner that best supports what we know about engaging families



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