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Webinar theme Family Engagement





Before we begin...

- A recording of today's webinar, slides and resources will be available on our website. earlylearningnetwork.unl.edu
- Use the Zoom Q&A feature for questions.
 - Facebook participants may post questions in the comments section of our Facebook Live video: @earlylearningnetwork
- Limit the chat box to dialogue & interaction.
 Tell us about yourself!



Network Mission

To advance the understanding of policies and practices that narrow the achievement gap and maintain early learning success as children transition from preschool to elementary school and beyond.



Network Team Map



Network Lead



Webinar 2: Family Engagement Home- and School-Based Activities to Support Student Success



Amanda Witte, Ph.D. University of Nebraska–Lincoln



JoAnn Hsueh, Ph.D. MDRC Home-based activities to promote early learning: Family engagement in rural and urban Nebraska

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

May 4th 2021



Family Engagement Dimensions

Home-Based Involvement

Active promotion of a learning environment at home (e.g., educational resources)

School-Based Involvement

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Activities and behaviors parents engage in at school (e.g., volunteering in classroom)

Parent-Teacher Relationship

 (\pm)

communication between parents and teachers

Dimensions of Family Engagement



Context and Time

- Children's environments influence learning and adaptation
- Family engagement has implications in the moment, over time, and during key transitions
- Home, school, and community environments have a significant influence on children's learning



Urban & Rural Nebraska





Parent-Teacher Relationships & Student Outcomes

- Immediate effects
 - Do parent-teacher relationships concurrently predict children's social skills and problem behaviors in PreK, K, and 1st grade?
 - Yes, teacher's positive perceptions of their relationship with parents during the school year predicted:
 - better child social skills
 - fewer problem behaviors



Parent-Teacher Relationships & Student Outcomes

- Sustained effects
 - Do sustained parent-teacher relationships across the PreK through 1st grade transition predict children's social skills and problem behaviors over time?
 - Yes, positive sustained parent-teacher relationships (as reported by PreK, K, and 1st grade teachers) predicted
 - improved child social skills
 - fewer problem behaviors



Transition from PreK to Early Primary Grades

- A sensitive period that has lasting impacts on children's development and outcomes
- Sets the foundation for a child's future school performance, as well as families' relationships with the educational system
- A difficult transition is associated with adjustment problems



Trajectories of Family Engagement: Home/School-based Involvement

Home-based Involvement

(e.g., learning activities at home)



School-based Involvement

(e.g., participation in school-offered events)



Trajectories of Parent-Teacher Relationships

Structural Communication

(e.g., basic information exchange)



Relational Communication

(e.g., partnership-focused communication)



Rural v. Urban Family Engagement

Home-based Involvement

(e.g., learning activities at home)

School-based Involvement

(e.g., participation in school-offered events)



n.s.

Rural v. Urban Family-School Relationships

Structural Communication

(e.g., basic information exchange)

Relational Communication

(e.g., partnership-focused communication)



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Changes in Engagement & Relationships over Time

Changes in program structure and expectations from Pre-K to Kindergarten may contribute to changes in relationships

- Greater emphasis on academic skills
- Class sizes increase and teacher-child ratios decrease
- Frequency of home-school contacts decreases



Urban and Rural Differences in Engagement and Relationships

Differences the physical environment, infrastructure, and relationship expectations may contribute to urbanrural differences.

- Barriers in rural communities may prevent parents from providing stimulating learning experiences at home.
- Rural and urban parents may have different perceptions of their roles in their children's early education.

Practical Implications

- Family engagement is vulnerable to changes over time
- Family engagement practices should be adjusted based on community context

 We can influence relationships which impact children now and in the future



Recommendations

- Prioritize relationships even as class sizes and academic rigor increases
- Identify stimulating at-home learning experiences available to all families
- Make clear the important role families play in education



Home-based activities to promote early learning: Lessons from Boston Public Schools (BPS) prekindergarten program

JoAnn Hsueh MDRC

May 4th 2021



Unpacking home-based learning: Are all activities equally influential for early learning?

Skill Domains	Constrained	Unconstrained
Literacy Language	 Show how to read book Practice writing alphabet letters Practice sounds letters make Practice rhyming words Learn names of letters/words Practice writing or spelling name 	 Read books Retell/make up stories Teach about world around them Talk about world around them Have child explain parts of storybook Define/discuss new words Name objects in books/world around you
Math	 Count number of things you can see/touch Count out loud Name/teach/learn shapes Identify written numerals Sort by size/color/shape Teach simple sums 	 Play with shape blocks Talk about how big something is/how much something holds Practice/teach directional words Read books about numbers/shapes Talk about money

Research Questions

- Do parents engage in home constrained and unconstrained language/literacy and math learning activities at different rates? Do these activities vary with parents' education levels?
- Does engagement in different types of home learning activities predict gains in children's early learning when enrolled in PreK? Do these associations vary with parents' education levels?



Our Boston PreK study sample is economically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse



Parents had varied levels of educational attainment



Parents report high rates of home learning activities; language/literacy more frequent than math

Average Weekly Use of Home Learning Activities



Engagement in different types of home learning activities varied with parental education levels

Average Weekly Use of Home Learning Activities by Parental Education



Engagement in home unconstrained learning activities predicts children's skill gains during PreK

- Higher levels of unconstrained language activities (e.g., telling stories, reading books) predicted gains in children's vocabulary during PreK.
- Higher levels of unconstrained math activities (e.g., cooking together, talking about measurement, reading books about math) predicted gains in children's math skills during PreK.



Engagement in home constrained learning activities did not predict children's skill gains during PreK

 More time at home teaching direct literacy (e.g., letters, sight words) and direct math skills (e.g., number, simple addition/subtraction) did not predict gains in children's language and math skills during PreK.



Time in home unconstrained language activities was more beneficial for children whose parents did not graduate college

Receptive Vocabulary by Use of Language Unconstrained



Time in home unconstrained math activities was more beneficial for children whose parents did not graduate college



Key recommendations

- Parents many of whom work often have limited time
- Engaging children in unconstrained learning activities may be the best use of parents' time:
 - Activities can be fun and interactive and don't seem like direct instruction.
 - Activities can better reflect the cultural, linguistic, etc. backgrounds of children and diversity of their interests
 - Activities may be less duplicative of what is taught in most everyday PreK programming.
 - They can be integrated in any everyday life (e.g., in the car, before bed, eating a meal).



Key recommendations

- Teaching children direct literacy and math skills at home may be redundant with what students are learning in PreK.
- Districts can consider supports to help parents engage in unconstrained activities at home. Some examples:
 - BPS's Home-School Connections Newsletter gives ideas for activities and materials that parents can use to engage in unconstrained activities, particularly in math.
 - Districts can provide or identify types of materials or manipulatives (e.g., shape blocks, books) to help parents engage in unconstrained learning activities at home.



Connect With Us

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Q&A

- What questions do you have?
 - Please put them in the **Zoom Q&A** box. (questions may get lost in the chat).
 - If you're joining on Facebook, post them in the comments section of our Facebook Live video.
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Upcoming Webinars

May 18: Diversity, equity and inclusion June 1: Individualized instruction and assessment

11:00 a.m. CDT | 12:00 p.m. EDT | 9:00 a.m. PDT

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Thank You

The Early Learning Network is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences.

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