



## ENGAGING FAMILIES

Families play a big part in supporting children’s learning during routines and play at home. Communicating with and forming partnerships with families is key to understanding cultural traditions and lifeways that you can incorporate into teaching practices. Here are some ways to form family partnerships using emergent writing.

### FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

#### SET UP A MESSAGING/MAIL SYSTEM BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL.

Children and parents can write messages to you. Messages might include important family or community cultural events, such as upcoming birthdays, POW WOWs, a new family member or pet, or holiday travel.

#### LITERACY BACKPACK.

Send home a book that children enjoy reading. Include a notebook that has writing prompts. For example, ask the family to write a short review of the book. For example, “What was your favorite part of the book? Who was your favorite character? Why? Is there anything you would change about the story if you could?”

Remember, for children from families who speak another language at home, ask parents which language they use to read and write with children. Then send books and writing prompts that works best for each family.



#### TRAVELING CLASSROOM MASCOT.

Send a class mascot (e.g., a stuffed animal) home with the children on weekends. Provide a notebook with writing prompts that families and children can complete together. This could include any adventures that happened during the time the mascot spent with the family (e.g., going to the grocery store or a relative’s house). Encourage children to draw pictures as well. Put these stories together in a book to include in your book corner or writing area.

### FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

#### NEWSLETTER.

Have children create a classroom newsletter for parents and families. Children can dictate to teachers what they want to say and include examples of their own writing.

#### INVITATIONS.

When there are opportunities for parents to join the class for an event, ask children to create invitations for parents and families. Have children decide what to say, what it should look like, and how to deliver it.

#### CHILDREN AS THE LIBRARIANS.

Have older preschoolers plan as a group to organize their library or book corner. Children can write labels for books, directions on how to check out books, book reviews, and a description of how the books have been organized. They can use drawings as well as writing.

#### FAMILY SHARING.

Encourage families to help their child create a picture or story of a community, event such a POW WOW, that they can share with their classmates.

Note: Work with families to find appropriate writing tools such as chunky markers, crayons, and pencils. For families worried about young children making a mess, suggest washable writing tools to help reduce clean-up.