



ENGAGING FAMILIES

Children develop best when they learn at school *and* at home. Families play a big part in supporting children's learning through routines and play at home. Communicating and partnering with families are key to making this happen. Here are some ideas to form family partnerships around make-believe play.

- **Help parents understand how their infants/toddlers are learning about play.** Take time to let parents know what foundational play experiences their children have engaged in and how they can support it at home. For example, share how infants explored toys and imitated your behaviors during play time or how toddlers used toys to pretend. Encourage families to look for these behaviors at home.
- **Invite parents to the classroom.** If a child's parent or other family member has expertise in your play theme, invite them to come speak about the topic. Or encourage parents to stay and play during pick up and drop-off. This is a fun way to include families, and well as incorporate children's cultures, backgrounds, and experiences into the make-believe play!
- **Create a family newsletter to send home.** Use the newsletter to explain the current play theme at school and provide scenarios the family can act out together at home. Children will love teaching their parents how to play!
- **Create a virtual blog.** You can update the blog weekly with photos or videos of children's make-believe play in the classroom. Offer play suggestions that families can try at home.
- **Invite families to attend a family play night.** Teach the families about the current play theme. Share the books and virtual field trips children are using to support their play. Have families engage in make-believe play with their children during family play night. If a family member cannot attend, invite them to attend class at a time when children are engaging in make-believe play. Or hold a mini play for families, where children act out some of the play scenarios and take on the roles they've been practicing during dramatic play!
- **Send home small child-made props for children and families to play with together.** This lets families know what their child is doing in class and gives children an opportunity to lead the play with their siblings and other family members.
- **Create a list of recyclable materials they can save and send to school.** Use these materials to make props for the play theme. Take pictures of the props made with the materials to share with families so they can see what their children did with all of the recyclables! Encourage parents to use open-ended recyclable materials to support make-believe play at home.

