



SUPPORTING PARENT SUCCESS

APPLYING WHAT WE *know* TO WHAT WE *do*

The Campaign for
GRADE-LEVEL
READING

PARENTS ARE THE *secret* SAUCE
.....



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FOREWORD

Parents are the Secret Sauce.

This has been the GLR Campaign’s mantra since the beginning. It is where we have placed a big bet — being explicit and intentional about positioning parent success at the front and center of our work. On the whole, GLR communities have joined in the “big bet” through efforts to support and equip parents, helping them ensure their children are ready for school, attend school every day, have enriching summers, and can read at grade level by third grade.

But we are not yet doing nearly enough. The work of supporting parent success requires more from us — more focus, greater intentionality, stronger partnerships, deeper investments, and above all, less judgment.

As the GLR Campaign continues to think about “what’s next” in our commitment to lift up parents, we took a look at two years of impressive work by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Zero to Three, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Learning Heroes, whose efforts have helped build our knowledge about the importance of supporting parents, particularly parents of young children. With the generous support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we helped inform some of this work and have synthesized this collection of efforts to provide this report to the GLR Network. More than a presentation of what we know, this is a report about *taking our knowledge into action at the local level*. It is here — in GLR communities across 42 states the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands — where our big bet on parent success will pay off, where the secret sauce is made and widely shared to ensure more hopeful futures for many more children.

Yolie Flores

Chief Program Officer

“Decades of research have demonstrated that the parent-child dyad and the environment of the family — which includes all primary caregivers — are at the foundation of children’s well-being and healthy development. From birth, children are learning and rely on parents and the other caregivers in their lives to protect and care for them. The impact of parents may never be greater than during the earliest years of life, when a child’s brain is rapidly developing and when nearly all of her or his experiences are created and shaped by parents and the family environment.”

— National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine



DECADES OF RESEARCH,

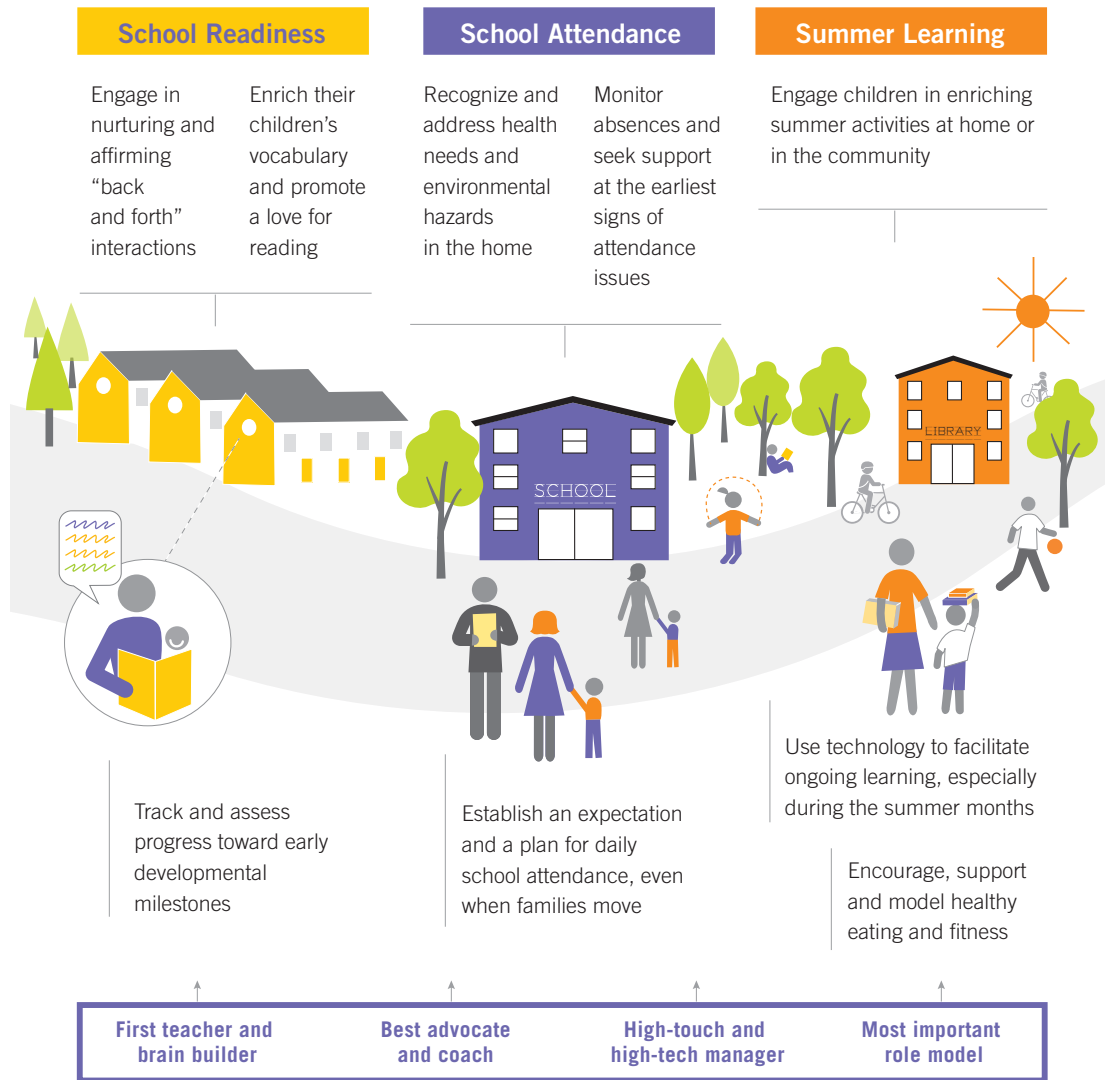
backed by science and plain old common sense, confirm that parents¹ — more than anyone else — have a crucial impact on children’s healthy development, school success, and positive life outcomes. They are their children’s first brain builder, nurse, teacher, tech navigator, advocate, and coach. They play a vital role during the early years and early grades, ensuring that children are ready for school by kindergarten, attend school regularly, continue learning during the summer months, and can read proficiently by the end of third grade. And their involvement is essential to make sure that children are born healthy, develop on track, and receive appropriate care for the health-related factors that determine early school success.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has a long history of promoting a two-generation approach to improving reading proficiency for children in low-income families — working to achieve successful outcomes for both children and parents. Several recent national efforts by leading experts and institutions have bolstered our conviction that parents are a key ingredient in children’s school success. These efforts (see list on p. 9) include a national study on parents, a federal policy statement on family engagement, essential frameworks, and a national parent survey — all guiding us toward an even stronger foundation on which to base our conviction that parents are the secret sauce!

This brief synthesizes these recent efforts and captures the most essential elements that align with the GLR Campaign’s commitment of supporting parent success. As important, it lifts up concrete strategies that GLR Network communities can put into action as they work to ensure that our vision of parent success is realized, ensuring early school success for more children.

¹The Campaign and this brief use the short-hand term parents and “parent success” to refer to all of the adult family members who may be involved in raising a child, as well as family friends and neighbors who play a significant role in providing child care.

GLR FRAMEWORK ON SUPPORTING PARENT SUCCESS
Essential parent competencies toward ensuring early school success



OUR *starting* POINT



The GLR Campaign’s approach to acknowledging parents as essential co-producers of good outcomes for their children has three major objectives:

1

Helping parents to
envision bold goals
for their own children

2

Supporting parents
in achieving
those bold goals

3

Joining parents in
marking progress and
celebrating success

The GLR Campaign aims to help parents in low-income families believe that their children can achieve big dreams, get excited about and committed to high expectations for their children, and connect with policies, programs, and practices that share those goals. Communities in the GLR Network help parents **develop a sense of confidence and efficacy** that they can attain bold goals for their children’s education by giving them opportunities to develop and use their successful parenting skills, knowledge, tools, and leadership and to form strong relationships with schools on their children’s behalf. And GLR communities find occasions to **mark progress and celebrate success** that will reinforce successful parenting skills.

By supporting parents and building their capacity to support children’s success, the GLR Campaign has placed a bet on parents’ central role in community solutions to ensure children’s healthy development, school readiness, school attendance, summer learning, and ultimately grade-level reading proficiency. And recognizing that we must leverage technology and public housing to help us reach and effectively engage more families, we have set to illustrate the connectivity and synergy through our “Bingo Matrix” in an effort to guide our work:

Increasing the number of children achieving reading proficiency requires aggregation and alignment of effort — across and between solutions and focus areas — for impact and scale.



GLR BINGO MATRIX			
	Readiness	Attendance	Summer
PARENTS			
HEALTH			
TECHNOLOGY			
PUBLIC HOUSING			

The GLR Campaign’s “bigger outcomes” approach — increments of positive change large enough to move the needle and close the gap — is reflected in the GLR Bingo Matrix, where we “double down” on readiness, attendance and summer learning by: integrating a focus on parent success and healthy child development as critical determinants of early school success; prioritizing children and families in public housing; promoting systemic solutions to the data challenges; and employing technology to assist with all of the above. Those programmatic elements will sit within a larger strategy built to reflect our bias toward both action and reflective practice and our insistence on back mapping, driving with data and forming coalitions of the willing.

parent success THEMES

PARENTS MATTER A LOT

The GLR Campaign's priorities for parent success resonate with the themes of recent national efforts summarized in this brief, which are:

- Parents matter.
- Parents want their children to succeed.
- Parents are experts and valuable partners in ensuring children's success.
- Parents have strong leadership and advocacy potential.
- Information and support make parent partnership possible.
- Certain conditions enable parents to succeed.

RECENT NATIONAL EFFORTS BOLSTERING THE CASE FOR SUPPORTING *parent success*

[Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0–8, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(2016\)](#) This report: identifies a core set of parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices tied to positive parent-child interactions and child outcomes; examines federal policies and investments that support parents and children in the United States; outlines a variety of interventions to reach parents of children with various needs; highlights the elements of effective parenting programs and strategies for increasing parent participation; recommends ways for various stakeholders to promote widespread adoption of effective programs and services; and highlights areas needing further research. During the 18-month process leading up to the report, the GLR Campaign's *Successful Parents Kitchen Cabinet* (supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation) provided input to the study committee in order to bring local voices and a community perspective to the deliberations.

[Policy Statement on Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades, U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, Interagency Policy Board \(2015\)](#) Recognizing the essential role that parents and families play in their children's educational outcomes, the Interagency Policy Board issued a groundbreaking policy statement on family engagement, to which the Campaign contributed. The 25-page statement: traces the ways in which federal statutes and policies governing early childhood and elementary education systems treat family engagement; distills 10 principles for effective family engagement; and recommends ways to implement family engagement practices across systems and within programs at the state and local levels.

[Office of Head Start: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework \(updated\), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(2016\)](#) Continuing to lead the nation in promoting the role of parents as co-producers of good outcomes for children, the Office of Head Start updated its engagement framework for the field. This framework helps providers assess and track progress across key indicators of effective family engagement to support children's learning and development.

[Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five](#), *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (updated 2015)* The Office of Head Start updated its framework to include the full continuum of learning for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, rather than just ages 3–5. The revised framework outlines and describes the skills, behaviors, and concepts that children should have or understand across these ages, including children who are dual language learners and children with disabilities. The framework addresses the domains of: approaches to learning; social and emotional development; language and literacy; cognition; and perceptual, motor, and physical development.

[Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#), *U.S. Department of Education (2014)* The Dual Capacity-Building Framework, based on research and best practices, aims to help local collaborators design family engagement strategies, policies and programs that enable educators and families to work together in supporting students' school success. While the framework suggests goals and conditions for success, it is not a blueprint. This framework: outlines the challenges to cultivating effective family-school partnerships; describes the core conditions needed for successful family-school initiatives and interventions; identifies intermediate goals for improving family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and specifies capacity-building outcomes for families and for school and program staff.

[National Parent Survey Report, Zero to Three and Bezos Family Foundation \(2016\)](#) In June 2016, Zero to Three and the Bezos Family Foundation conducted discussion groups and an online survey with more than 2,000 parents nationally to gain a clear and in-depth understanding of the challenges they face, the help they seek, and their level of satisfaction with the information they receive.

[Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders: A Self Assessment and Planning Tool for Non-profits and Schools](#) *The Annie E. Casey Foundation (August 2016)* This publication introduces an assessment and planning tool to help nonprofits evaluate their parent engagement efforts and chart a path toward deeper partnerships with parents and caregivers.

[Parent Perspectives, Learning Heroes \(2016\)](#) In 2016, Learning Heroes conducted a national parent survey, “Parents 2016: Hearts and Minds of Parents in an Uncertain World,” surveying more than 1,300 K–8 parents.

1 PARENTING PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT *matter a lot*



Research and practice confirm that **helping parents succeed as parents is the single most important strategy for children's success** in the early years, the early grades, school in general, and life as a whole. Parents' actions and interactions with children have a powerful effect on whether their children will be ready and able to succeed in school and beyond. Parenting practices that are particularly important, according to the array of experts who contributed to *Parenting Matters*, are:

- Serve-and-return (back-and-forth) interactions;
- Showing warmth and sensitivity;
- Routines and reduced household chaos;
- Shared book-reading and talking to children, which helps to avoid the “word gap” between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers when they enter kindergarten;
- Attention to health and safety, including prenatal care, breastfeeding, vaccinations, adequate nutrition and physical activity, monitoring, and household/vehicle safety; and
- Appropriate discipline.

Meanwhile, the *Office of Head Start: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework* outlines seven key outcomes attributable to positive parent and family engagement:

- Family well-being;
- Positive parent-child relationships;
- Families as lifelong educators;
- Families as learners;
- Family engagement in transitions;
- Family connections to peers and community; and
- Families as advocates and leaders.

HEAD START PARENT *and* FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

A

Family Well-Being

Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.

B

Positive Parent-Child
Relationships

Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

C

Families as
Lifelong Educators

Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

D

Families as Learners

Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

E

Family Engagement
in Transitions

Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school.

F

Family Connections to
Peers and Community

Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

G

Families as Advocates
and Leaders

Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

2 PARENTS *want* THEIR CHILDREN TO *succeed*



Given the knowledge and opportunity, parents are very likely to set and pursue ambitious goals for their children's school success. The central messages of the *Zero to Three National Parent Survey Report* are: that parents want to learn about positive parenting strategies and wish they had more information about these practices; and, when parents know how to help their children start school ready to learn, they are eager to do everything they can to ensure their children's school success.



69% OF PARENTS
say that if they knew more
positive parenting strategies,
they would use them



54% OF PARENTS
wish they had more information
about *how to be a better parent*

Source: Zero to Three

3

PARENTS ARE *partners* IN THEIR CHILDREN'S *healthy development* AND SCHOOL SUCCESS



If we want parents to envision and “own” good outcomes for their children, then programs, institutions and systems need to **engage parents as experts, equal partners, and even leaders in co-creating programs and policies**. Partnership between parents and providers in health, early learning and education is key to ensuring children’s healthy on-track development, early learning and school success.

A central theme and message from the recent efforts on parents is that authentic partnerships with parents are an essential element of successful parent engagement. Partnership with parents is especially important: when determining the types of services that would most benefit parents and their children (*Parenting Matters*); when building trusting, respectful relationships between families and professionals that “support families’ connections and capabilities” (*From the Early Years to the Early Grades*); and when setting goals for children in the classroom, home and community (From *Office of Head Start: Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework*).

The *Office of Head Start: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework* draws from many years of parent involvement in Head Start. For example, parent decision making has always been an important part of family involvement in Head Start. The *PFCE Framework* builds on this tradition and suggests that, in many circumstances, family input (from parents who participate in policy council and parent committees, as well as parents who do not) could be used in a systemic and integrated way. Further, program activities that promote family involvement have always been an important part of parent and family engagement in Head Start. Programs are more likely to make progress in achieving family engagement and school readiness goals when these activities are tied to a systemic and integrated approach.

According to the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework*, “Research shows that initiatives that take on a partnership orientation — in which student achievement and school improvement are seen as a shared responsibility, relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school, and families and school staff see each other as equal partners — create the conditions for family engagement to flourish.” Forging a partnership with these characteristics, however, often requires fundamental shifts in attitudes and structures, from system leadership

to the front-line staff. According to *Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems*, a family engagement toolkit for service providers and program leaders, key strategies for co-creating programs and services with parents as partners include:

- Developing values and principles that support family engagement and leadership,
- Building capacity to consistently support families and staff in new roles, and
- Sharing power with families, even if their actions challenge “business as usual.”

Too often, however, schools, districts, and other institutions have not developed the capacity to partner with parents, or they implement strategies that lack a strong racial equity/cultural competence dimension — an essential lens and approach to building partnership with families. To this end, *Parenting Matters* calls for professionals who work with children to receive enhanced training in interacting with parents and in making decisions jointly with them. It also recommends that the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services create and disseminate a toolbox of evidence-informed models, programs, and practices for engaging parents and sharing decisions with them in early education settings. *From the Early Years to the Early Grades* suggests that school districts, schools, and early childhood programs establish policies, procedures, and practices that:

- Provide access to families and invite them to participate in learning activities;
- Create family-friendly environments; and
- Develop family and professional relationships linked to learning, development, and wellness.

In addition to partnering with systems and services, informal partnership *among* parents (e.g., through opportunities for peer support) helps to encourage engagement, reduce stigma, and increase the sense of connection to other parents with similar circumstances, *Parenting Matters* reports. All of those outcomes are important to the GLR Campaign’s focus on helping parents set and pursue bold goals for their children. Similarly, *From the Early Years to the Early Grades* recommends that schools and school systems support connections among families through networks and opportunities for mutual social support.

THE DUAL CAPACITY-BUILDING FRAMEWORK *for* FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

The Challenge:
**INEFFECTIVE
FAMILY-SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS**

>

Lack of opportunities for
School/program staff to build
the capacity for partnerships

Lack of opportunities for
Families to build the capacity
for partnerships

**CREATING THE
RIGHT OPPORTUNITY
CONDITIONS**

>

Process Conditions

- Linked to learning
- Relational
- Development vs. service orientation
- Collaborative
- Interactive

Organizational Conditions

- Systemic — *across the organization*
- Integrated — *embedded in all programs*
- Sustained — *with resources and infrastructure*

**PROMOTING MORE
EFFECTIVE POLICY AND
PROGRAM GOALS**

>

To build and enhance the
capacity of staff/families
in the “4 C” areas: >

- Capabilities (*skills and knowledge*)
- Connections (*networks*)
- Cognition (*beliefs, values*)
- Confidence (*self-efficacy*)

**EFFECTIVE
FAMILY-SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS**

>

School and program staff who can

- Honor and recognize families’ funds of knowledge
- Connect family engagement to student learning
- Create welcoming, inviting cultures

Families who can negotiate multiple roles

- Supporters
- Encouragers
- Monitors
- Advocates
- Decision Makers
- Collaborators

What can communities do to position parents as partners? Acknowledging parents as full partners represents a shift in how many programs and organizations currently approach parents (especially those serving low-income families). ESSA, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, may be a lever to move more districts in this direction. It requires school districts to implement policies for engaging parents to boost student outcomes, and this offers an opportunity to reposition families as partners in the early years and the early grades.

To help make this shift, GLR communities can:



- Convene leaders of family-serving organizations (and parents themselves) to begin a conversation about changing the mind-set on how programs work with families and promoting a culture in which parents are valued as experts, equal partners, and leaders. Promote a “cultural humility”² approach, which acknowledges that parents/families have a great deal of expertise about their children and how to help them be successful. Explore resources that demonstrate this approach, such as Brazelton Touchpoints Center and efforts by Dr. Dayna Long at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland.



- Encourage school districts and non-profits working with families to assess their family engagement and capacity building strategies. The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Nonprofits and Schools* can help communities begin this process.



- Establish a workgroup to develop guidelines and share measurement tools that can help organizations modify their internal structures and practices so they support parents more effectively.



- Encourage service providers to use the *Office of Head Start: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework* to assess and track their progress in helping families support children’s learning and development.



- Work with local school districts to identify and implement effective strategies for working with families as equal partners in children’s school success, including how to create opportunities for parents to participate in leadership and decision making. A first action could be for the school district to adopt and implement the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*. Adopting and implementing the dual-capacity framework will require schools and districts to assess and inventory their current policies and practice, strive for balance and coherence, and move away from practices inconsistent with the framework.

²This term was coined by Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia. See <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10073197>.

4

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT MAKE *parent partnerships* POSSIBLE



To succeed as co-producers of good outcomes for their children, **parents and other caregivers need knowledge and support.** *Parenting Matters* identifies several types of necessary information and support and calls for scaling up interventions that contain them, including:

- **Two-way, culturally-relevant communication** with parents about “children’s developmental milestones and parenting practices associated with healthy child development,” with a special emphasis on “communications to sub-populations where inequalities exist: immigrant families; linguistic, racial, and ethnic minorities; families in rural areas; parents of low socioeconomic status; and fathers.”
- **Family information and education** on key topics, such as reading and talking to children, “serve and return” behavior, routines and reduced household chaos, and use of appropriate discipline.
- **Voluntary home visits** by nurses or parent educators to establish personal connections and a sense of shared enterprise in supporting children’s success and to share information about healthy child development.
- **Efforts to address trauma**, which affects a high percentage of individuals in some communities and can interfere with parenting and healthy child development.

From the Early Years to the Early Grades further emphasizes the importance of communicating with parents about their children’s health, mental health, and social-emotional well-being and suggests that local school districts, schools and early childhood programs prepare parents to participate in planning, decision making and oversight groups such as boards, councils, committees or working groups.

Parent Perspectives by Learning Heroes offers these tips on how to communicate:

- **Treat parents as the end user of information**, in addition to teachers, administrators, and students.
- **Make it personal and emotional**. Parents primarily care about their own children, not “all” children. Don’t lead communications with data points but rather with how this impacts their child and what they can do about it.
- **Provide “doable” action steps** — a few simple actions parents can choose to take to support their child’s learning.
- **Give context** — reasons and information on why a policy or practice matters personally to them and their child.
- **Less is more**. Include more visuals than text or data.
- **Create resources specifically for parents**, available in mobile-friendly formats and appropriate languages.

Experts recognize that the **professionals who engage with parents may also need extra information and support to partner effectively with parents**. Unfortunately, many of the programs designed to prepare professionals to work with young children do not include evidence-informed strategies for partnering successfully with families. *Parenting Matters* calls for improving professionals’ ability to deliver evidence-based parenting interventions, enhancing program providers’ knowledge of and competence in interacting with parents, and developing and disseminating best practices in parent engagement. And in highlighting staff capacity as one of the essential principles of effective family engagement, *From the Early Years to the Early Grades* calls specifically for programs to:

- **Prioritize** professional development opportunities that support staff to view parents as capable, competent partners.
- **Strengthen** staff’s ability to form positive, goal-oriented relationships with all families.
- **Develop** professional capacity in working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including immigrant communities, and in partnering with families who have children with disabilities, special health care needs, or other unique needs.

“ Families are their children’s first and most important teachers, advocates, and nurturers. As such, strong family engagement is central — not supplemental — to the success of early childhood systems and programs that promote children’s healthy development, learning, and wellness. Effective family engagement practices are a marker of quality early childhood programming. Together, states, LEAs, and schools and early childhood programs have the responsibility to promote and implement effective family engagement to improve children’s learning, development, and wellness.”

— Interagency Policy Board, U.S. Dept. of Education & Dept. of Health and Human Services

What can communities do to increase what parents know and do to improve their children's school readiness? Most communities can strengthen parenting capacities through existing programs such as Head Start/Early Head Start, WIC, and home visiting programs. Yet millions of families do not access these programs. *Parenting Matters* recommends that communities improve referral mechanisms to reach more vulnerable families and leverage services that parents do use to enlist their help in building parents' capacities.

To increase the number of vulnerable families accessing services where they learn how to improve their children's school readiness, GLR communities can:



- Identify places that reach large numbers of vulnerable families, such as community health centers, early care and education programs, community services, and housing agencies.
- Share guidance with these organizations and programs on ways to help more parents access effective interventions, such as Head Start, WIC etc.
- Leverage technology to reach parents about important parenting practices. GLR partners that can help include the National Head Start Association, Ready Rosie, *Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read Sing*, and Moms Rising.
- Join the GLR Vroom Network. Vroom sends daily messages to parents with everyday activities that promote serve-and-return interactions and more. GLR Bright Spots to learn from include Sarasota, Kansas City, and Gulfport. *See the full list of Vroom communities at www.joinvroom.org/people-and-partners.*



- Partner with promising parent leadership programs that view parents as experts, such as Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors, Communities Organizing Family Issues (COFI), PIQE and others.

To disseminate information on parenting practices that lead to healthy child development, GLR communities can:

- Work with local partners from family-serving organizations to ensure that all parents are aware of the importance of developmental screenings for their children and, once screened, have access to needed interventions.
- Promote developmental screenings as “learning check-ups” in an effort to remove any stigma. To learn more about how this framing is helping to increase the number of children being screened for developmental issues and serving families with multiple needs in Ohio, *check out the Columbus Kids & Franklin County Kids model at www.columbuskids.org.*



- Learn how to use Medicaid as a lever to ensure that more children are screened and receive services through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.
- Enlist all coalition partners to promote these practices, especially those representing large-scale family-serving agencies such as Early Head Start, Head Start, WIC, home visiting programs, early education providers and community health centers. Other partners, from faith-based organizations to local barbershops, also can help spread the word. Bright Spots to learn from include Get Georgia Reading and its *Talk With Me Baby* Campaign.

What can communities do to provide information and support to professionals who work with children and families? GLR communities can:



- Encourage professional development programs to adopt the *Talk With Me Baby* curriculum and/or training materials developed by Get Georgia Reading for nurses, WIC nutritionists, social workers, foster parents, early learning educators and pediatricians. These materials embrace the value of working with parents as equal partners while strengthening the family-serving workforce to close the word gap. They also promote many of the parenting practices associated with positive child outcomes for school readiness identified in the *Parenting Matters* report.
- Connect the local school district(s) with networks like the District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement to improve its ability to engage with parents.



5 CERTAIN *conditions* ENABLE PARENTS TO SUCCEED



Parents are more likely to use information and support effectively when certain enabling conditions exist. Findings synthesized from the recent efforts featured in this brief indicate that parents are best able to help their children succeed when policies, procedures and practices within schools and other family-serving systems meet these criteria:

- Make data on children’s progress accessible and understandable to parents;
- Tailor interventions to the specific needs of individual families;
- Are relevant and responsive to the families’ cultures, language, and norms;
- Create continuity and consistency for children and families;
- Help families transition smoothly to new learning settings;
- Establish strong relationships with community partners that work with families;
- Partner with families as co-creators of programs and policies;
- Embed effective family engagement strategies within early childhood systems and programs; and
- Integrate, align and collaborate in delivering services to families with multiple service needs.

On the last point, the Head Start *PFCE Framework* advises program leaders and staff to align engagement strategies across the program environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning activities and community partnerships. The framework emphasizes a “systemic, integrated, and comprehensive approach” in which: family engagement is anchored in leadership priorities, program management, continuous improvement systems, and staff development; engagement activities occur throughout the entire organization; and staff “consider the strengths, interests, and needs of each child and family” and connect them with services and resources tailored to those aspects.



The findings, frameworks, policy statements and parent voices that we've synthesized underscore something people who work with children have always known: parents and families matter, and they want to help their children succeed. These efforts also point to the need for family-serving organizations to understand, respect and support parents as experts and equal partners in ensuring children's healthy development and school success.

GLR Network communities can lead the nation in supporting parent success as they move forward with the work. The next stage brings opportunities to connect parents and other adult family members, friends, and neighbors who care for children with information, skills, tools and support. It offers more ways to partner with parents and families as we work to help children develop on track, prepare for kindergarten, attend school regularly, keep learning over the summer, and read proficiently by the end of third grade. And it provides the occasion for us all to recommit to creating the conditions that enable parents to succeed. When parents succeed, children succeed. And when children succeed,

WE ALL SUCCEED.

“When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated... family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.”

— Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

