

What Do We Mean by “Family Engagement?”



Co-creating a Definition and State
Framework with Families and
Communities

Presenters

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Agenda

- Learn about an “accordion” process to alternate larger focus groups with small design team meetings, to co-create a definition of high impact family engagement.
- Through a “fishbowl” activity, hear what parents and families said about what high impact means to them and how it resonates with current research.
- Leave with a template and charts to craft your own definition and framework, and to obtain stakeholder consensus and ownership.

Who is in the room?



What do you want to learn
about?

Icebreaker



What does high impact family engagement mean to YOU?

CT Definition and Framework Project

- To **co-create** a clear, useful Definition of high-impact family and community engagement in children's learning and development.
- To **co-develop** a Framework for using the definition that includes core values, effective strategy examples, and user-friendly tools.
- To **co-promote** the definition's integration into policy and practice across the state.

Fishbowl

- How did we get started?
- What did we do?
- What did parents tell us?
- What did we come up with?

AND

- What might this look like in practice?

Policy Drivers

Department of Education

- State Board Plan - Commissioner's Roundtable
- Strategic Plan
- ESSA plan

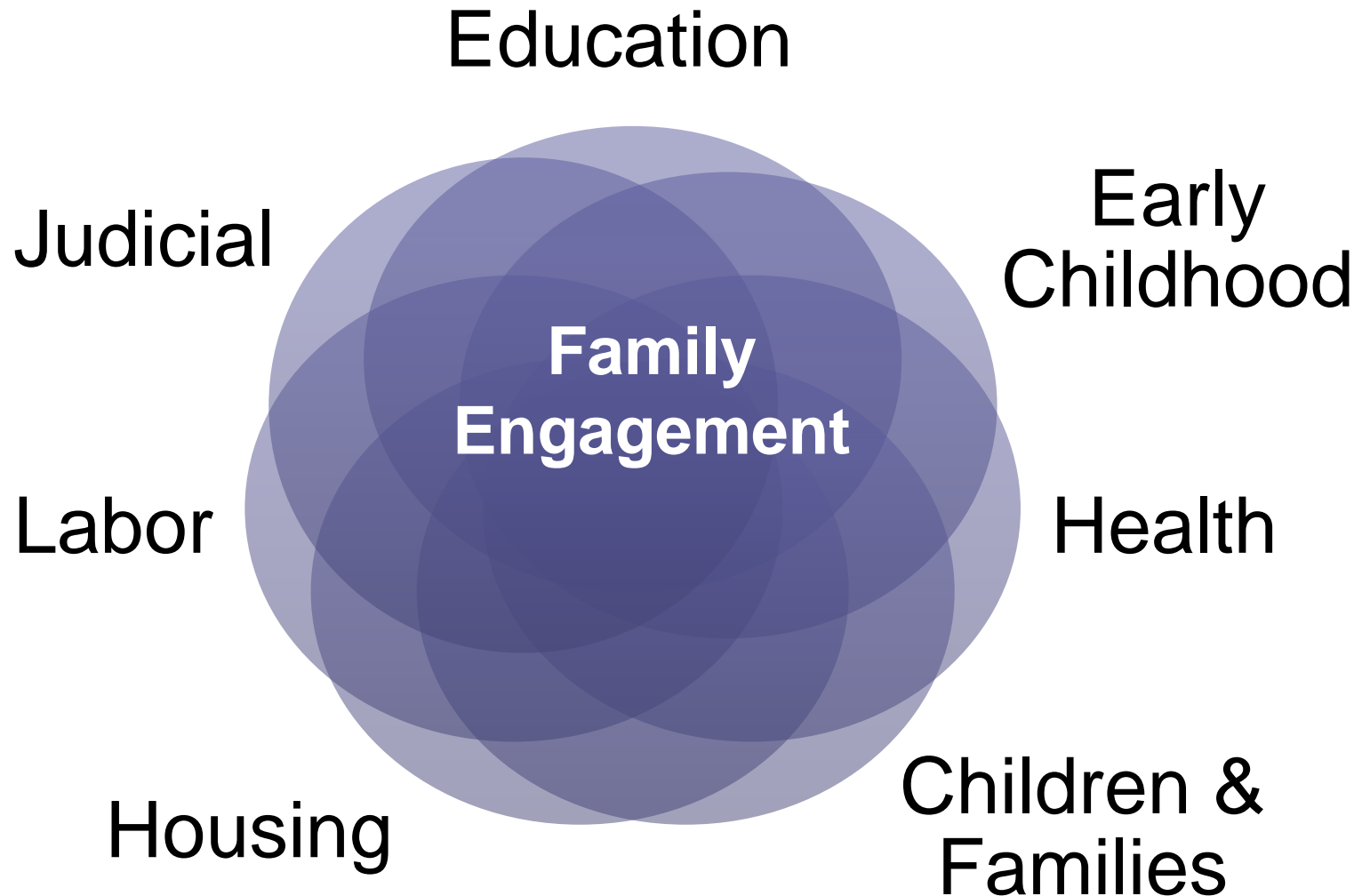
Office of Early Childhood

- Quality Rating & Improvement System
- Preschool Dev. Grant
- Head Start

Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

- Vision: Common definition of family engagement
- Funding priority

Common Vision



Roadmap for Co-Creation

✓ Research-Based	Design Team began with research-based draft language
✓ Parent Voice	Input from 5 parent focus groups -- 4 in person and 1 on social media
✓ Leaders' Input	Reviewed and revised 2x with Commissioner's Roundtable
✓ Broad Representation	Review and input at statewide invitational Symposium
✓ Key Informant Check-In	Design Team reviewed and finalized
❑ State Agency Endorsement	Final draft to Commissioners of SDE and OEC and Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

What Did Parents Say?



Themes, Quotes and Stories
from Parent Focus Groups

1. What does FE mean to you?

- Parents are welcome partners and have a valued voice
- No one size fits all! Close parent-teacher collaboration in children's learning required
- Teachers/staff welcome and respect all families, learn their needs, help them access services -- so that families feel fully supported
- Everyone feels part of the school community.

What does FE mean to you?

Nike Tykes embraced Katherine and our family after a traumatic experience at another child care center. We felt so welcome. This program feels like family. They are so protective of Katherine. We know she is safe here.

Manchester, Nike Tykes,

9/12/17

2. What should FE look like?

- ❑ Teachers know all kids and families; work to build relationships
- ❑ Families invited to come in, learn what kids are doing each day
- ❑ Constant, open communications -- use e-mail, phone calls, pictures, and texts
- ❑ Data reports tell parents how kids are doing, how parents can help
- ❑ School supports parents to be advocates for their kids and go to bat for them

What should FE look like?

It is important for me to know what my daughter is learning; when you are not from this country you can be totally lost!

The teacher teaches us what to expect when our children go to school and how they can be prepared. They give us activities for the children and for the parents too.

Danbury CT, 10/31/17

3. What should teachers/staff do?

- ❑ Be open-hearted, open-minded, and personable at every step and level
- ❑ Offer classes for parents to understand curriculum and how to help their child
- ❑ Create more opportunities for parent-teacher conversation
- ❑ Practice more consistency from year to year, class to class.

What should teachers/staff do?

I hope that teachers and staff will be open minded and disregard implicit biases that are disrespectful and hurtful to families.

Social media focus group, 8/15/17

Invitational Symposium

□ Leadership

- Commissioner Wentzell
- Commissioner Wilkinson (Harriet Feldlaufer, Director)
- Kimberley Russo, Early Childhood Funders Collaborative
Executive Director, The Fund for Greater Hartford

□ 110 Attendees

- Families
- Educators
- Community Leaders
- Philanthropy
- Higher Education
- Early Childhood
- K-12
- Demographics
- Geography
- Urban/Rural

Finally: What is the Definition?

- ❑ **Family Engagement is a *full, equal, and equitable partnership***
- ❑ **among families, educators and community partners**
- ❑ **to promote children's learning and development**
- ❑ **from birth through college and career.**

What is Full and Equal?

- **Full:** Families, educators and community partners collaborate closely and consistently, making sure that ALL children not only have access to high quality learning opportunities, but also the supports they need to succeed.
- **Equal:** Families and educators recognize that both bring valuable knowledge to the table. Their deep knowledge and skills are complementary, overlapping, and essential to ensuring children's success.

What is Equitable?

- ***Equitable:*** families are empowered to work with educators, public officials, and community partners to remove systemic, structural, and organizational barriers that perpetuate inequities and injustice.

This includes ready access to ample opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to become full and equal partners in that deliberate and intentional work.

Connecticut's Framework

Guiding Principles

Roles and Responsibilities

Families

Educators

Policy-makers, public officials and philanthropists

Display: What does high-impact family engagement look like in early childhood, K-12, and afterschool programs?

Background, appendices and references

How to move Forward?

- What would you and your colleagues need to make a commitment like this a reality in your setting?
- What would be most useful -- information, materials, tools, examples -- to use it fully and well?

Resources

- Handouts on high impact practice in ES, afterschool, and early childhood settings.
- A Roadmap Template for a family engagement definition process
- CT's Definition Statement and report