Family involvement is an important component of a quality early childhood education program and helps promote positive outcomes for children. For prekindergarten children, these outcomes include school readiness skills, such as language and literacy, communication skills, social competence, and cognitive development. Family involvement occurs in a variety of different ways and is more than volunteering in the classroom. Researchers at the Harvard Family Research Project (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006), found that three family involvement processes support positive outcomes for children.

1. Parenting – quality parent/child relationships, parental participation in child-centered activities
2. Home-School Relationships – communication, frequency of contact between the parents and the school, participation in activities
3. Responsibility for Learning Outcomes – emphasizing activities at home that support school success, supporting literacy at home, everyday parent-child conversations.

Best Practice
The Administrators’ Walkthrough Checklist for Prekindergarten Classrooms, developed by the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) project, identifies indicators of quality programs. Family Involvement is addressed in the Administrators’ Walkthrough Checklist by the following indicator:

There is evidence that family involvement is encouraged in the classroom and at home.
Examples of this indicator in the classroom include:

1. Teaching staff explains activities and classroom rules to family members and guides them in participating in the classroom, outdoors, and in other class activities and events, according to school rules
2. There is evidence that teaching staff encourages family members to share cultural heritage and practices, stories, activities, and languages
3. Teaching staff shares positive behavior strategies for consistency in addressing challenging behaviors both at home and at school

The pictures below give examples of the indicator for family involvement.
**Description:** The teacher sends children’s work and class projects home on a regular basis. Included in the folder is a monthly newsletter that addresses class activities, upcoming events, and strategies to support skill development in the home. Every effort is made to send materials home in the child’s native language.

**Description:** The teacher uses a parent mailbox system that hangs near the doorway. Information is placed in the pocket with the child’s name.
Description: The teacher uses a planner system to maintain quality home-school connections. The teacher uses the planner to communicate daily on topics such as progress, behavior, or strategies to support a newly learned task.

Description: Recognizing that not all parents can spend time in the classroom, this teacher asks parents to record themselves reading books using a tape recorder and classroom book that is sent home. The tape is kept in the classroom. Tapes are made in the child’s native language when appropriate.
Description: This teacher posts photos from home as well as current class activities in the quiet/reading area. The photos are posted at eye level for the children and are changed frequently.

Reflection
In your classroom, is there visible evidence of support for family involvement?

I learnt most not from those who taught me, but from those who talked with me.
- St Augustine

Resources and References


Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE)
FINE is part of the Harvard Family Research Project. The work of the Network includes increasing teacher and administrator preparation in family involvement and community
partnerships, dissemination of assessment methods in family involvement programs and training models, and highlighting opportunities for families and schools to participate in the design and implementation of teacher preparation programs. Current information on school/teacher/family partnerships is available through their resource link. http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine.html

National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA)
The purpose of the NPTA is to encourage parent and public involvement in public schools. The Resource section of the Web site provides helpful suggestions for parents and teachers. http://www.pta.org/

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
One component of its mission is to “increase opportunities for families to be more involved in their children’s learning at school and at home.” Partner organizations work with postsecondary institutions and local schools to develop teacher preparation and professional development opportunities in family involvement. http://www.pfie.ed.gov


Technical Assistance & Training System (TATS)
TATS is a statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs in Florida serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. The TATS Web site provides information and resources on curriculum and instruction, evaluation and assessment, family involvement, inclusion, program effectiveness/quality, and transition as well as links to early childhood partners. http://www.tats.ucf.edu


TATS eUpdates are a service of the Technical Assistance & Training System Communities of Practice. The TATS eUpdates are intended to provide current information related to best practices or trends in the education of young children with special needs in the areas of Transition, Program Effectiveness, Inclusion, Curriculum & Instruction, Evaluation & Assessment, and Family Involvement. For more information about the TATS Communities of Practices and the TATS eUpdates, please log on to http://www.tats.ucf.edu.