

ASQ and the power of parent engagement

The importance of quality interaction—and how the ASQ is built to help

You've probably noticed that lately, the concept of parent and family engagement has been getting a lot of attention—from early childhood education researchers, publications, and practitioners in the field. And for good reason: studies have shown time and again that the more parents and families are involved in their children's development and education from day one, the better equipped those parents will be to support early developmental goals, and ultimately, the better prepared their children will be for school.

By its very design ASQ relies on the involvement of parents and families, so you know firsthand how the quality and quantity of parent engagement can impact a child's success.

According to Christopher Henrich, Ph.D., Georgia State University Department of Psychology, parent engagement in early childhood education occurs when families participate in school activities, make connections with teachers and other parents, get involved in school decision-making, and engage their children in learning activities outside of school.

Sheridan et al., 2011, maintains that parent involvement includes three dimensions: warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness; support for a child's emerging autonomy and self-control; and participation in learning and literacy.¹

The case for parent engagement has been proven by a variety of studies^{1, 2, 3} in recent years, and several organizations—including the Office of Head Start, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Abecedarian Project have included it as a key element of their guidelines or mandated performance standards.

Six habits of highly engaged programs

It's clear that parental involvement is associated with better outcomes. So how can early childhood education programs better engage with families? NAEYC's *Engaging Diverse Families Project* (<http://bit.ly/NAEYCDvrsFmls>) set out to answer this very question, and they discovered that the programs with the most effective approaches to parent engagement shared **six common principles** (<http://bit.ly/NAEYCPncplsPrctc>).

Since parent engagement is at the heart of ASQ, by using the screener, your program is probably already encompassing many of these principles.



Programs can encourage engagement by providing learning activities parents can try outside of school.

Principle 1: Programs invite families to participate in decision-making and goal setting for their child.

ASQ helps educate parents about developmental milestones and their child's strengths, and after screening, parents and families are encouraged to consider what to expect next and how they can help support their child's development. For some families this may mean setting goals to address a score that falls in the monitoring zone, and for others this may mean a discussion about whether a referral is needed.

Principle 2: Teachers and programs engage families in two-way communication.

Many centers review ASQ results during parent conferences, making the questionnaire a starting point for an open dialogue about goal-setting. Programs can use the ASQ-3 Parent Conference Sheet to help organize discussions and take notes.

Mary Lou Kitchen, director at Silver Spring Child Care Center in Maryland has found the ASQ-3 to be a helpful tool during her parent/teacher conferences. "It allows both parents and teachers to talk about the child's skills and to start the conversation about areas of development that are of concern or may need further assessment."

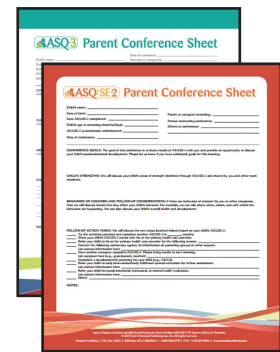
Principle 3: Programs and teachers engage families in ways that are truly reciprocal.

Because questionnaires solicit information directly from parents, who know their child best, programs that use ASQ begin their engagement on even ground. By treating parents as the experts and inviting them to provide the information that starts the conversation about their child's abilities, screening results are more accurate and the parent feels valued.

Principle 4: Programs provide learning activities for the home and in the community.

ASQ introduces appropriate developmental activities that can be done at home. For example, both the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE User's Guides provide reproducible sheets of activities for parents to try with their children. And, **ASQ-3 Learning Activities** (<http://bit.ly/ASQ3LrngAct>) (available in English and Spanish) offer an additional 400+ activities that parents can use to encourage development at home.

"The resources that have come with the ASQ have been instrumental for parents to provide school readiness activities at home and to understand the objectives that we cover in our plans," says Jessica Trail, Head of Faculty & Administration at The Young School in Maryland.

Parent Conference Sheets

View these resources at:
<http://bit.ly/ASQConference>

Principle 5: Programs invite families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts.

NAEYC found that some of the most engaged programs invited families to participate in decision-making about the program itself, as well as advocating for early childhood education in the wider community.

Principle 6: Programs implement a comprehensive program-level system of family engagement.

NAEYC's sixth principle emphasizes the importance of institutional policies and practices that ensure teachers, administrators, and other staff have the support they need to fully engage with families.

The family-friendlier screening tool

To learn more about ASQ and parent engagement, check out these additional resources.

Discover the advantages of parent-report screening tools (<http://bit.ly/WhyPrntRprt>)

Make screening more convenient for families

Support parents during the screening process (<http://bit.ly/HlpPrntsEbk>)

¹ Sheridan, S., Knoche, L., Kupzyk, K., Pope Edwards, C., & Marvin, C.A. (2011). Randomized trial examining the effects of parent engagement on early language and literacy: The Getting Ready intervention. *Journal of School Psychology*. 49, 3, pp. 361–383.

² Henrich, C. C., & Blackman-Jones, R. (2006). Parent involvement in preschool. In E.F. Zigler, W. Gilliam, & S.M. Jones, et al. (Eds.), *A vision for universal preschool education*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

³ Korfmacher, J., Green, B., Staerkel, F., Peterson, C., Cook, G., Roggman, L., Faldowski, R. A., & Schiffman, R. (2008) Parent involvement in early childhood home visiting, *Child Youth Care Forum*, DOI 10.1007/s10566-008-9057-3

This article is reprinted from our FREE ASQ e-newsletter.
Sign up at <http://bit.ly/ASQNews>