



## PFCE Framework Family Outcomes References Summary

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### Introduction

Below you will find a list of annotated references that the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE) developed to highlight key research findings for each of the seven Family Outcomes of the Parent Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. These articles, book chapters, reports, and other resources identify research findings and evidence-based practices that Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) staff can use to support PFCE in their programs.

Some of the resources offer examples of effective practices in HS/EHS. Others describe research on successful interventions in other service systems (e.g., public schools, home visiting, mental health) that can help to guide work within HS/EHS programs. Still others describe the results of current studies on how young children's development, school readiness, and family outcomes relate to one another.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all research related to the PFCE Family Outcomes. Instead, it is a practical catalog of high-quality resources that HS/EHS staff can use to build a bridge between research on PFCE and what you do each day. The resources are organized by PFCE Outcome. However, many of the PFCE Outcomes are interrelated, and you may find that research on one applies to others as well.

## Family Well-being

*Family well-being* refers to families that are safe, healthy, and financially secure. Many different characteristics of children, parents, families, and the communities in which they live affect family well-being. Therefore, researchers have studied a number of different factors that impact a family's safety, health, and security. Studies show that parental mental health and a family's financial security influence family functioning. Therefore, several key resources on these two topics are listed below to help HS/EHS staff become more familiar with research on this PFCE Outcome.

### **Parental Mental Health**

**Ammerman, R. T., Putnam, F. W., Bosse, N. R., Teeters, A. R., & Van Ginkel, J. B. (2010). Maternal depression in home visitation: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*(3), 191-200.**

Maternal depression is common in families receiving home visiting services. This paper reviews recent research on the prevalence, impact, and treatment of a mother's depression in families participating in home visiting programs. The authors summarize research findings on home-based approaches and discuss promising, evidence-based strategies to address maternal depression successfully. This resource has specific recommendations for researchers and home-based practitioners for working with families affected by depression.

**Beardslee, W. R., Ayoub, C. A., Avery, M. W., Watts, C. L., & O'Carroll, K. L. (2010). Family Connections: An approach for strengthening early care systems facing depression and adversity. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 80*(4), 482-495.**

The authors of this study worked with a large early care provider and a Head Start (HS) center to develop and implement Family Connections (FC). FC is a systems-wide prevention based program that uses training and mental health consultation to improve staff's ability to cope with depression and related challenges in families with young children. The researchers gathered data at the beginning of the study and during three years of FC. The sources of data included staff interviews, focus groups, consultant report, observation by assessors, and staff documentation. During the study period, the center served 424 families from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds.

The study found that FC had positive results. FC was easy to deliver and led to effective parent, classroom, and teacher activities that lasted over time. HS teachers showed an improved ability to cope with the challenges they faced in their work with parents and children. They also used fewer sick days.

The mental health consultants' long-term involvement was especially important to the staff's ability to reflect on their own practices.

**Beeber, L. S., Holditch-Davis, D., Belyea, M. J., Funk, S. G., & Canuso, R. (2004). In-home intervention for depressive symptoms with low-income mothers of infants and toddlers in the United States. *Health Care for Women International*, 25(6), 561-580.**

This is a pilot study of a short-term home-based intervention in Early Head Start (EHS). The study included African American and White, Non-Hispanic mothers of infants and toddlers. The mothers were randomly assigned to the intervention or to the usual care/wait list. Mothers met with master's level psychiatric mental health nurses in the mothers' homes with the goal of improving: (a) the parents' management of depressive symptoms and life issues, (b) the family's use of social support, and (c) the quality of parenting.

The group that received the intervention had less severe depressive symptoms at 8 and 16 weeks. The mothers receiving the usual care/wait list did not show these same improvements. These results suggest that the intervention was successful in reducing maternal depression.

**Chazan-Cohen, R., Ayoub, C., Pan, B. A., Roggman, L., Raikes, H., McKelvey, L., & Hart, A. (2007). It takes time: Impacts of Early Head Start that lead to reductions in maternal depression two years later. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 28(2), 151-170.**

This study used data from the Early Head Start (EHS) Research and Evaluation Project, and showed that EHS can reduce maternal depression. However, the positive impacts on depression and mothers' use of mental health services were not seen until children reached kindergarten. Specifically, EHS services that were delivered to children at age two and three years of age led to a later positive impact on maternal depression. Positive child characteristics explained more than 57% of the later impact on depression, and positive parent characteristics explained over 35% of the later impact on depression.

**National Research Council and Institute of Medicine [NRC & IOM] (2009). *Depression in parents, parenting and children: Opportunities to improve identification, treatment, and prevention efforts*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. [On-line] [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12565](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12565).**

This report summarizes research on how depression impacts parenting. Depression affects approximately 7.5 million parents and 15.6 million children in the U.S. each year, but only one-third of depressed adults get the services and treatment they need. In turn, parental depression negatively affects the

emotional, behavioral, and physical health of children. This resource offers a thorough overview of the prevalence of parental depression, its impact on children, and evidence-based strategies for working with families living with a depressed parent.

Overall, the evidence suggests that a family-focused approach is most effective—one that considers the impact of a parent’s mental health on all family members. It is also important to form collaborative relationships across services providers and settings (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start programs, schools, obstetrics-gynecology and pediatric clinics, prisons, other community agencies).

### **Financial Security**

**Ayoub, C., O'Connor, E., Rappolt-Schlichtmann, G., Vallotton, C., Raikes, H., & Chazan-Cohen, R. (2009). Cognitive skill performance among young children living in poverty: Risk, change, and the promotive effects of Early Head Start. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 24*, 289-305.**

This study examined links between risk and protective factors and the cognitive development of young children in Early Head Start (EHS). The researchers used data from the EHS Research and Evaluation Project, a study of 3,001 children and families living in poverty. The results revealed several significant findings.

First, the cognitive skills of children living in poverty decreased from age one to age three. Second, certain factors predicted faster declines in children’s cognitive development. These factors included receiving government assistance, mothers with less than a high school education, children with lower cognitive and language stimulation at home, and children with high levels of negative emotions. Third, children whose family received government assistance, whose parents were unemployed, and whose mothers had less than a high school education had lower scores on a measure of cognitive development at age three than children without these characteristics. However, children in EHS had higher cognitive skill scores at age three than children who were not enrolled in EHS.

**Duncan, G. J., & Magnuson, K. A. (2005). Can family socioeconomic resources account for racial ethnic test score gaps? *The Future of Children, 15*(1), 35-54.**

This paper discusses whether different socioeconomic conditions can explain racial and ethnic gaps in school readiness among American preschoolers from White, Black, and Hispanic backgrounds. The authors

explored past research to consider how a family's financial resources matter to children's school readiness. They focused on four key issues that affect children's well-being: income, education, family structure, and neighborhood conditions.

The authors present many evidence-based policies and programs that may help close socioeconomic gaps. These policies and programs include increasing family income and maternal education, strengthening families, and improving neighborhood conditions.

**Joo, M. (2010). Long-term effects of Head Start on academic and school outcomes of children in persistent poverty: Girls vs. boys. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32(6), 807-814.***

This study looked at the long-term effects of Head Start (HS) on school outcomes for children who grew up in chronic poverty. Girls' participation in HS was related to higher cognitive ability and lower rates of school suspension, expulsion, and grade repetition during the school years (ages 7-17).

The effects of HS were separate from the effects of home environments and neighborhood conditions. However, children's long-term outcomes were more strongly predicted by the home environment and parent education than by participating in early childhood education programs such as HS. The results suggest that the effects of HS may not last over time without improving the quality of the home environment.

**Caughy, M. O., & Campo, P. J. (2006). Neighborhood poverty, social capital, and the cognitive development of African American preschoolers. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 37(1/2), 141-154.***

The purpose of this study was to examine how the family and neighborhood environments of young children (ages 3-4.5 years) influence their cognitive development. The researchers analyzed data from a socioeconomically diverse group of 200 African American children living in 39 neighborhoods.

Both positive parent involvement and poverty strongly predicted children's cognitive skills. However, neighborhood poverty was related to poorer problem-solving skills more strongly than the family's economic resources or positive parent involvement. The results suggest that efforts to improve cognitive outcomes for children will be less successful in preparing children for school if they do not address neighborhood factors.

Cushon, J. A., Vu, L. T. H., Janzen, B. L., & Muhajarine, N. (2011). Neighborhood poverty impacts children's physical health and wellbeing over time: Evidence from the Early Development instrument. *Early Education & Development, 22*(2), 183-205.

This study investigated how neighborhoods and neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage impact children's school readiness. The researchers looked at three groups of kindergartners in Canada at three different time points (2001, 2003, and 2005). The results showed that average scores of physical health and well-being, communication, and general knowledge decreased over time. However, specific findings varied by neighborhood. Neighborhood financial socioeconomic disadvantage was related to less physical health and well-being. The results of this study show that socioeconomic disadvantage at the neighborhood level places children at risk for difficulties in school.

## Positive Parent-Child Relationships

The PFCE Outcome of Positive Parent-Child Relationships means that parents and families can develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development. These relationships begin with the transition to parenthood. The resources listed below highlight experiences and characteristics that have the greatest impact on relationships between parents and their young children.

**Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2007). Externalizing problems in fifth grade: Relations with productive activity, maternal sensitivity, and harsh parenting from infancy through middle childhood. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1390-1401.**

This study examined parenting, self-control, and externalizing behavior in over 1,000 children from birth to 5th grade. The researchers used observations of mother-child interactions and parent report measures to assess three parenting factors: maternal harshness, sensitivity, and opportunity for productive activity. They also measured the home environment and children's self-control and behavior problems.

Findings showed that parenting problems in infancy and toddlerhood were linked to children's behavior problems in grade 5. Parenting in middle childhood was an even stronger predictor of behavior problems. Self-control and later parenting explained the relation between poor parenting in preschool and child behavior problems. Parenting factors were important to children maintaining self-control over time. These findings support the hypothesis that parents support their children's development of self-control when they provide their children with sensitive care and offer a wide range of learning activities.

**Cabrera, N., Shannon, J., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2007). Fathers' influence on their children's cognitive and emotional development: From toddlers to pre-k. *Applied Developmental Science*, 11(4), 208-213.**

This paper summarizes several research studies showing that father engagement had positive effects on children's cognitive, language, social, and emotional development. They found that fathers who were educated and whose partners had supportive relationships with their children were more supportive and less intrusive. Fathers' supportiveness was especially important for children's language, cognitive, and emotional regulation skills at 24 months. These same effects were not found for mothers. Mothers who were intrusive in parent-child interactions had children who scored lower on measures of emotion regulation at 24 months and pre-K, and on language development at pre-kindergarten. However, this was not true for fathers.

The results show that different types of involvement with children by mothers and by fathers may have unique effects on their children's development. Also, programs that increase fathers' education and engagement with their children are likely to have significant advantages for their young children.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). *Parent training programs: Insight for practitioners*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control. [On-line] [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/Parent\\_Training\\_Brief-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/Parent_Training_Brief-a.pdf)**

In this meta-analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), researchers reviewed 77 evaluations of parent training programs from 1990-2002. The goal of the meta-analysis was to determine which program components are related to better outcomes for children (ages birth to seven) and their parents. The report makes "best practice" recommendations based on which aspects of parent training programs made the most difference for parents who participated.

The CDC's recommendations for helping parents gain the necessary skills and behavior included: teaching parents emotional communication skills and positive parent-child interaction skills, and requiring parents to practice with their children during program sessions. The best approaches for decreasing children's externalizing behavior problems were: teaching parents the correct use of "time out", teaching parents to respond consistently to their child, teaching parents to interact positively with their child, and requiring parents to practice these skills during program sessions.

**Love, J. M., Kisker, E. E., Ross, C., Raikes, H., Constantine, J., Boller, K., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Vogel, C. (2005). *The effectiveness of Early Head Start for 3-year-old children and their families: Lessons for policy and programs*. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(6), 885-901.**

This article explains some of the key findings from a randomized control trial evaluation study of Early Head Start (EHS), a study of 3,001 families in 17 EHS programs. Researchers used caregiver reports, child assessments, and observations of parent-child interactions when children were age three to understand the impact of EHS on parent and child outcomes.

The study found that children in EHS performed better than children who were not in EHS on measures of cognitive and language development. EHS families also showed more emotional engagement by parents, better attention to play objects by children, and fewer aggressive child behaviors. EHS parents offered more emotional support, provided more language and learning stimulation, spent more time reading to children, and spanked children less

often than non-EHS families. The greatest effects were seen in programs that offered a combination of home-visiting and center-based services, and for programs that fully implemented the performance standards soon after a family enrolled in the program.

**Pinquart, M., & Teubert, D. (2010). Effects of parenting education with expectant and new parents: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology, 24(3), 316-327.***

This article describes research from 142 randomized controlled trial evaluations of programs that promote effective parenting during the transition to parenthood (from the prenatal period to six months after birth). Many interventions had a small but significant impact that was maintained over time in the following areas: parenting, parenting stress, child abuse, health-promoting behavior of parents, cognitive development, social and motor development of the child, child mental health, parental mental health, and couple adjustment.

The degree to which programs impacted child and family outcomes varied based on the following factors: when the intervention began, how it was delivered, the qualifications of practitioners, the length of intervention, and the intervention goals. These differences are discussed in light of findings that parenting-focused interventions for new parents can be effective.

**Roggman, L. A., Boyce, L. K., Cook, G. A., & Cook, J. (2002). Getting dads involved: Predictors of father involvement in Early Head Start and with their children. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 23(1-2), 62-78.***

This research article looked at father involvement in a group of 72 low-income, primarily Caucasian fathers with infants enrolled in Early Head Start (EHS). Most fathers who participated in this study lived with or were married to their child's mother. The researchers' goal was to explain how characteristics of fathers were related to their involvement in the EHS program and with their infants.

The results showed that fathers who were more educated, were less depressed, used social support (especially spiritual support), and actively participated in their religion were more involved than fathers who did not have these characteristics. Also, fathers with these characteristics who also had better relationships with their home visitors had less anxiety about their close relationships. In addition, fathers who reported participating in more activities with their infants at ten months were more engaged with their children than fathers who reported participating in fewer activities. In general, fathers who were the least likely to engage in EHS programs also needed the most support to become involved with their infants.

**Raikes, H. A., & Thompson, R. A. (2005). Efficacy and social support as predictors of parenting stress among families in poverty. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 26*(3), 177-190.**

This study tested the hypothesis that social support and self-efficacy (the ability to identify and address one's own problems) influence parenting stress. The researchers worked with a group of 65 low-income mothers enrolled in Early Head Start (EHS) to test whether social support and self-efficacy are psychological strengths that lead to lower levels of parenting stress and protect against financial disadvantage.

Findings showed that family risk and mothers' self-efficacy were related to parenting stress. However, family income alone was not related to parenting stress. Mothers with more self-efficacy had lower levels of parenting stress. Income did not have the same impact on stress for mothers with high self-efficacy. The results suggest that programs should work with the entire family to reduce family risk and parenting stress. Supporting parents' ability to identify and address challenges on their own is key to reducing the negative effects of risk in their lives.

## Families as Lifelong Educators

The PFCE Outcome of Families as Lifelong Educators refers to the idea that parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities. Research on parents as educators of their young children is fairly limited compared to research on some of the other PFCE Family Engagement Outcomes (e.g., Family Well-being, Positive Parent-Child Relationships, Family Connections to Peers and Community), but is still important. You will find several evidence-based resources below.

**Dunst, C. J., Hamby, D., Trivette, C. M., Raab, M., & Bruder, M. B. (2000). *Everyday family and community life and children's naturally occurring learning opportunities. Journal of Early Intervention, 23(3), 151-164.***

The authors of this article studied 3,300 families to understand the learning opportunities in the everyday lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are at risk for developmental delays. One group of families completed surveys on *family life* as the source of learning opportunities. A second group of families completed surveys about *community life* as a source of learning opportunities. Surveys included questions on daily routines, traditions, celebrations, and racially and culturally significant opportunities for learning.

Results showed 11 categories for family learning opportunities, and 11 categories for community learning opportunities. These categories are described in detail in the article. The researchers advise that practitioners should focus on using everyday routines, rituals, and socialization activities to help parents foster children's development. They also note that learning opportunities in the community involve social contact with other individuals, who make important contributions to children's language, social, and cognitive development.

**Huebner, C.E. & Payne, K. (2010). *Home support for emergent literacy: Follow-up of a community-based implementation of dialogic reading. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31(3), 195-201.***

This study examined the long-term outcomes of an intervention that teaches parents to use an interactive "dialogue" reading style when reading with their children at home. About half of the 78 participants received instruction in dialogic reading (DR) when their child was 2 or 3 years old. The other half had no prior instruction in reading styles.

Two years after implementing the program, an evaluation of parent-child reading styles showed significant differences in parents' use of DR techniques. Parents who had received instruction in DR used 90% more DR behaviors than

parents who had not received instruction. Parental use of DR behaviors was associated with increased active participation of the child during reading sessions.

These findings suggest that brief instruction in dialogic reading has lasting effects on parental reading style, and on active participation of the child. The authors conclude that instruction in dialogic reading is low-cost and easy to use, and also provides an effective means of parental involvement in children's emergent literacy development.

**Liew, J. (2012). Effortful Control, executive functions, and education: Bringing self-regulatory and social-emotional competencies to the table. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(2), 105-111.**

This article links two areas of research — effortful control and executive function — to look at how self-regulation impacts learning and achievement across a child's development. *Self-regulation* is the ability to maintain arousal, emotionality, and motivation at reasonable levels for everyday functioning. *Effortful control* is voluntary control over skills such as attention and behavior. *Executive function* is the ability to engage in goal-directed thoughts and actions using attention, flexibility in thinking, and memory. Children need each of these skills to develop positive teacher-child relationships and to succeed in school.

The authors suggest that teachers need to understand self-regulation beyond a child's ability to pay attention. Children's academic learning depends on environments that foster effortful control skills and executive functioning. Children can develop these skills at home and in the classroom in the following ways: participating in cognitive tasks and games that require different kinds of memory skills, developing positive relationships with teachers, and receiving help from adults to form pro-social relationships with peers. Providers can talk with families about the value of participating in these activities, both at home and at school, to support healthy self-regulatory and social-emotional development in their children.

**McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(3), 363-377.**

This research article examined kindergarten parent involvement among 307 low-income, ethnic minority children and their caregivers in a large, urban school district. Parents reported on school involvement, children's academic abilities, and children's play behaviors and social skills at home and at school.

Results of the study showed that kindergarten parent involvement was related to children's social and academic skills. Specifically, parents who promoted learning at home, had direct regular contact with the school, and faced fewer barriers to family involvement, had children who showed positive engagement with other children and adults. These parents also demonstrated a healthy engagement with their children's learning. The researchers concluded that parent involvement in school is essential for economically disadvantaged families. Schools should work to reduce barriers to parent involvement in this population.

**Sheriden, S. M., Knoche, L. L., Ewards, C. P., Bovaird, J. A., & Kupzyk, K. A. (2010). Parent engagement and school readiness: Effects of the Getting Ready intervention on preschool children's social-emotional competencies. *Early Education and Development, 21(1), 125-156.***

This study is an evaluation of a parent engagement intervention called *Getting Ready*. *Getting Ready* focuses on enhancing school readiness among disadvantaged children through parent engagement. The program pays particular attention to children's social-emotional outcomes. The sample included 220 children (average age of 43 months) from 28 Head Start (HS) classrooms in a Midwestern state.

The results showed that rates of positive change in attachment, initiative, and anxiety/withdrawal over the four-year study period were better for HS children who received the intervention than for HS children who did not receive the intervention. No significant changes were found for anger/aggression, self-control, or behavior problems. The results suggest that *Getting Ready* can be an effective way to support parent engagement and improve social-emotional outcomes for young children.

**St. Clair, L. & Jackson, B. (2006). Effect of family involvement training on the language skills of young elementary children from migrant families. *The School Community Journal, 16(1), 31-42.***

This article examines the effects of a parental involvement training program on the English language skills of children from migrant families. Families were recruited from the Migrant Education Even Start (MEES) program, and all participating children were English language learning (ELL) kindergarten students. Over the course of the school year parents were offered 25 one-hour training sessions. During these sessions, MEES staff modeled culturally sensitive ways to support children's learning at home and provided resource materials on the kindergarten curriculum.

An assessment at the end of the children's first grade year showed that children from families participating in the MEES parental involvement training program scored significantly higher than children in the control group on measures of English language skills. Overall, the research findings suggest that parental involvement training can be an effective way to enable migrant families to promote their children's language skills through activities in the home. The authors emphasize the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration between parents, teachers, and parent educators in order to best engage parents and promote language development in children in migrant families.

Trumbull, E., Rothstein-Fisch, C., Greenfield, P. M., & Quiroz, B. (2001). *Bridging cultures between home and school: A guide for teachers*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

This book is a practical guide for helping educators understand families' diverse cultural views and beliefs about education that differ from the dominant American culture. For example, the dominant culture stresses independence, individualism and individual assertions. However, collectivist cultures do not necessarily share these values. The authors state that educators should not assume that one culture has the best approach or view other cultural understandings in a negative light. Instead, it is important to communicate clear expectations for development, values, social skills, and academic achievement in their interactions with families. In turn, families may better understand school expectations, raise questions and concerns, feel heard, and contribute to a culturally sensitive curriculum. The authors discuss these and other implications of research on cultural diversity in education.

## Families as Learners

Families as Learners is the PFCE Family Engagement Outcome that focuses on how parents and families can advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals. The research presented here discusses many benefits to parents who have opportunities to learn within programs and their communities.

**Duch, H., & Rodriguez, C. (2010). Strengthening families in Head Start: The impact of a parent education programme on the emotional well-being of Latino families. *Early Child Development and Care*, 181(6), 733-748.**

This study explored the impact of a parental support program on children's behavior and maternal depression in 50 Latino families participating in Head Start (HS). To promote parents' self-sufficiency, the program offered families educational and vocational support in addition to typical HS services.

The results showed that mothers who received these extra services had lower levels of depression compared to mothers who received regular HS services. Children's social skills increased and behavior problems decreased, regardless of whether their parents were involved in self-sufficiency promoting activities. The researchers determined that the additional services helped families connect with HS, which lessened maternal depression and increased parental involvement. Recognizing the parent's own educational and vocational goals was an important factor in the program's success.

**Sullivan, K., Clark, J., Castrucci, B., Samsel, R., Fonseca, V., & Garcia, I. (2011). Continuing education mitigates the negative consequences of adolescent childbearing. *Maternal & Child Health Journal*, 15(3), 360-366.**

This study of over 3,500 low-income and minority adolescent mothers looked at the protective effect of continuing education on teen parenting outcomes. The findings showed that young mothers scored lower than older mothers on a measure of the home environment. However, age was no longer a factor in home environment scores when mothers continued their education. The results show the importance of encouraging adolescent mothers to continue their education to increase the chances of raising children in a safe, healthy, nurturing, and positive home environment.

**Prins, E., Toso, B. W., & Schafft, K. A. (2009). "It feels like a little family to me": Social interaction and support among women in adult education and family literacy. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59(4), 335-352.**

This article uses qualitative research from two studies of family literacy to

examine the importance of social interaction and support for women living in poverty. The results showed that the women had limited opportunities for socialization and recreation outside of the program. However, for women with limited social support and social ties, family literacy programs offered a social space that allowed them to leave the house, enjoy social contact and support from others, establish supportive relationships with teachers, and pursue self-discovery and self-development.

These findings suggest that informal adult education and family literacy programs play an important role in increasing social support among women living in poverty and in enhancing their psychosocial well-being.

**Caspe, M. (2003). *Family literacy: A review of programs and critical perspectives*. [On-line] <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-literacy-a-review-of-programs-and-critical-perspectives>**

This review of research focuses on intergenerational family literacy programs that use a combination of strategies, including: early childhood intervention, early parenting support, increasing adult literacy, and enhancing parent support for children's school readiness. The author defines family literacy, describes key perspectives on family literacy intervention, highlights important program principles, and offers examples of how the principles were implemented in three different programs.

Key program principles include: (a) understanding parents' literacy strengths and reinforcing their knowledge and skills, (b) believing that literacy is acquired through dialogue and that learners actively contribute to their own learning, (c) providing opportunities to reflect on literacy practices in daily life, (d) recognizing the literacy history of parents, (e) examining resources in a sociocultural context, (f) breaking down patterns of social isolation, (g) responding to adults' and children's interests, and (h) documenting experiences to learn from them.

## Family Engagement in Transitions

Family Engagement in Transitions is the PFCE Family Outcome that focuses on how parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments. These transitions between learning environments include EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school. The majority of research conducted in this area examines the transition to kindergarten, and the resources listed below primarily focus on that period. However, study findings offer important insights into other transitions as well.

**Cooper, C.E., Crosnoe, R., Suizzo, M., & Pituch, K.A. (2010). Poverty, race, and parental involvement during the transition to elementary school. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(7), 859-883.**

This study explores how parental school involvement, family income level, and race affect children's success in school during their transition to kindergarten. The researchers interviewed parents, assessed children's math and reading achievement, and gave questionnaires to teachers and school administrators.

The results showed that parents in low-income families were less likely to provide cognitively stimulating materials for their children and were less likely to be involved in their child's education at school. Children from these low-income families scored significantly lower than children from families with higher income levels on measures of math and reading achievement.

The authors suggest that although parents in low-income families may want to become more involved in their child's education, financial troubles, and limited time may prevent them from doing so. Also, teachers and school administrators may have negative attitudes about these parents and their children that discourage parental involvement. The researchers suggest that to best promote the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged children, educational policies should consider levels of parental involvement, income level, and potential racial differences among families.

**Early, D. M., Pianta, R. C., Taylor, L. C., & Cox, M. J. (2001). Transition practices: Findings from a national survey of kindergarten teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 28, 199-206.**

This article examines data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning's Transition Practices Survey of kindergarten teachers to determine what factors predict teachers' use of effective transition practices. The study draws on prior research by the authors, presents and analyzes survey findings,

and suggests methods for improving schools' administrative procedures to improve teachers' transition practices.

The authors make specific recommendations to promote better transition practices among kindergarten teachers, including: providing teachers with class lists earlier in the summer, offering teachers specialized transition training, and aiming to keep kindergarten class sizes small.

**LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Pre-kindergarten teachers' use of transition practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*, 124-139.**

This article examines how pre-kindergarten teachers' use of transition practices relate to children's social and academic adjustment to kindergarten. The authors looked at how often pre-kindergarten teachers use certain transition practices and explored the connections between these practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten. The findings suggest that using transition practices can protect against the impact of social and economic risks, such as poverty and school adjustment.

**Pianta, R., & Kraft-Sayre, M. (2003). *Successful kindergarten transition: Your guide to connecting children, families & schools*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.**

This is an evidence-based guide for preschool and kindergarten teachers, administrators, family support specialists, and other early childhood professionals for creating a smooth transition to kindergarten. Using field-tested methods of developmental, ecological, and collaborative models of transitions, the authors outline the steps required to put these practices into action.

Recommended strategies include: forming a collaborative team; supporting social connections among children, families, and professionals; developing a range of transition activities; and creating a timeline to implement the transition plan. The appendices provide activities on brainstorming, parent interviews, timelines, and questionnaires with forms that can be photocopied.

**Schulting, A. B., Malone, P. S., & Dodge, K. A. (2005). The effect of school-based kindergarten transition policies and practices on child academic outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 41*(6), 860-871.**

In this study, researchers used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study's Kindergarten Class to study the effect of transition practices on children's academic performance in kindergarten. The findings showed that transition practices modestly improved students' academic achievement in kindergarten, as well as parent involvement in kindergarten activities. Transition

practices were most useful for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. These students were also the least likely to experience these practices at the schools they attended.

Useful approaches to kindergarten transitions included: developing a district-wide plan to increase leadership that meets the needs of each school community; increasing information and support to each school; and improving data collection for continuous program improvement.

**Wildenger, L. K. & McIntyre, L. L. (2011). Family concerns and involvement during kindergarten transition. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 20(4), 387-396.**

This article focuses on the needs, concerns, and levels of school involvement of caregivers in families with a child entering kindergarten. Results from a parental survey showed that 28% of parents had significant concerns about their child's transition to kindergarten. These concerns were primarily about the child's socio-behavioral transition. Parents wanted more information leading up to the child's transition, specifically about: their child's current academic skills; kindergarten academic expectations; information about the kindergarten program and teacher; and steps the kindergarten staff has taken to prepare the child for transition. Many parents reported low-intensity and infrequent transition practices such as visiting the kindergarten classroom. Only a few parents reported higher-quality individualized practices.

The authors encourage school professionals to build strong partnerships with families, and to work on improving communication between the school and home. Professionals can work with parents to clarify the expectations of the kindergarten classroom and form individualized transition plans. This can help to ease parental anxieties and concerns. By improving the quality of family experiences during the kindergarten transition, school professionals can help align the school and home environments and ultimately improve the transition process for everyone involved.

## Family Connections to Peers and Community

Family Connections to Peers and Community emphasizes the supportive role of connections with peers and mentors in a family's life. These social networks can be formal or informal, and can offer support or education. These connections improve social well-being and community life for families and their individual members. The resources you will find below explore the impact of social networks on family life in both urban and rural communities.

[Marshall, N., Noonan, N., McCartney, K., Marx, F., & Keefe, N. \(2001\). It takes an urban village: Parenting networks of urban families. \*Journal of Family Issues\*, 22\(2\), 163-182.](#)

This study looked at urban parents' social networks in a group of 206 African American, European American, and Hispanic American families with an elementary school-aged child. The researchers predicted that children would show a greater level of well-being if they had the following experiences: a variety of interactional styles, more cognitive stimulation, supportive adults outside the immediate family, opportunities to observe adult social interaction, and practice socializing with adults. They also expected that parents who had more social support and less closely-knit, kin based support would be more competent and responsive parents.

Study findings showed a positive effect of parental social support on parenting and children's well-being. However, effects varied among different racial/ethnic groups. Group differences are discussed in detail.

[Cochran, M., & Niego, S. \(2002\). Parenting and social networks. In M. H. Bornstein \(Eds.\), \*Handbook of parenting, Volume 4: Social conditions and applied parenting\* \(2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 123-148\). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.](#)

This chapter reviews research on how a parent's network of social relationships influences his or her parenting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The authors examine different meanings of social relationships in families' lives and the purposes that relationships serve for them as parents, such as helping them provide for children's basic needs and support their children's development. Case studies offer examples of how social networks operate in a family's life. A review of the research highlights how culture, class, race, and family structure influence the "pool" of individuals that are available to parents. The authors close the chapter with a discussion of how social networks can be improved through parent's individual actions, policies, and programs. The authors also make recommendations for future research.

Horvat, E. M., Weininger, E. B., & Lareau, A. (2003). Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 319-351.

This article used ethnographic data to look at social class differences in relationships between families and schools. Specifically, the researchers focused on parental networks—an important part of social capital. They describe characteristics of social networks across different classes and the ways that these networks operate when parents face challenging school situations. The middle-class parents tended to react as a group (collectively), whereas working-class and poor parents did not. Middle-class parents also used their contacts with professionals to gather the information, expertise, and authority that was necessary to successfully confront school officials. No race differences were found in the study.

Seiling, S. B., Manoogian, M. M., & Son, S. (2011). "I don't know how we would make it": Social support in rural low-income families. In J. Bauer & E. M. Dolan (Eds.), *Rural families and work: Context and problems* (pp. 157-183). New York: Springer Science and Business Media.

This chapter gives an overview of research on social support in rural low-income families. The authors define social support and present relevant theories. The literature reviewed helps to explain how informal networks work when families' needs are high but resources are limited. Mothers' narratives from the Rural Families Speak (RFS) project show the types, strengths, and limitations of these support networks. The authors discuss different types of social supports and their related benefits and costs. The authors also provide strategies for supporting employment and positive family well-being outcomes for rural low-income families.

## Families as Advocates and Leaders

The PFCE Outcome of Families as Advocates and Leaders highlights the importance of parent and family participation in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, and community and state organizing activities. This participation will help to improve children's development and learning experiences. Research on this topic gives evidence that providing a range of different opportunities for parents to become leaders and advocates is beneficial to HS/EHS programs, families, and children.

**Auerbach, S. (2010). Beyond coffee with the principal: Toward leadership for authentic school-family partnerships. *Journal of School Leadership, 20(6), 728-757.***

This study examined qualitative data from two studies on school leadership: one study of family literacy programs, and another study of 35 administrators' visions of family engagement. Leaders were site or district administrators working with low-income schools with a large proportion of Latino/Latina, low-achieving students. The descriptive data offer a broad range of possibilities for leadership within educational settings. The individual stories offer models for aspiring or current leaders who want to create successful school-family partnerships that go "beyond the bake sale."

**Bruckman, M., & Blanton, P. W. (2003). Welfare-to-work single mothers' perspectives on parents' involvement in Head Start: Implications for parent-teacher collaboration. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 30(3), 145-150.***

This qualitative study describes the perspectives of five low-income single mothers' on parent-teacher collaboration in Head Start (HS). Three themes were examined: (a) mothers' motivations for choosing a HS program, (b) their experiences of their relationships with HS teachers, and (c) parent self-development and learning.

Mothers reported that collaboration with HS teachers had positive effects for their children, their development as parents, and their development as individuals. The researchers recommend encouraging parents to become more involved in their children's education by offering a variety of different involvement opportunities. In particular, HS staff can allow parents to be resources in their children's classroom. This may increase parent's positive views of themselves and promote parents' feelings of being respected and valued.

**Trainor, A. A. (2010). Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education home-school interactions: Identification and use of cultural and social capital. *Remedial and Special Education, 31(1), 34-47.***

This paper describes the results of a qualitative study exploring parents' perceptions about their participation in the special education process. The researcher conducted five focus groups and 27 in-depth individual interviews to gather data on how parents use cultural and social capital for the purpose of advocating for their child.

The three guiding research questions were: (a) What types of cultural and social capital do parents think is necessary to advocate for their children? (b) When advocating on behalf of all children with disabilities and their families, do parents employ additional or different resources? and (c) How do parents' perceptions of their roles as advocates vary based on race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and child disability? Parents' answers revealed that there were few differences within and between cultural parent groups. The study findings inform how parent advocacy can support educational justice.

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