

Best Practices in Family and Community Engagement Video Series:
Family and Community Partnerships for School Readiness (Chautauqua)

[Music]

Narrator: Partnerships are at the center of successful Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Partnerships between families and programs and between programs and community organizations rely on a commitment to a common goal: positive outcomes for children and families. At the Head Start program run by Chautauqua Opportunities in Western New York State, partnerships are a priority. The program partners with families to set goals that can lead to greater family well-being and success in school and in life.

Teacher 1: You're here today. I'm, like, yeah, I get to be with you.

Kathy Webster: What we do here at Chautauqua Opportunities is we've taken the Head Start model, which is rooted in families moving and having upward progress, and helping them to better themselves and to better their child towards their school success. So whatever we do is focused around the family.

Roberta Keller: We work comprehensively with the household. So our goals is that everybody become all that they can be by providing opportunities and greater educational success.

Teacher 2: Brad, so can you show us your deep breaths again? [Brad is deep breathing] Do you think your heart's beating slower or faster when you calm down? Slower, and then --

Roberta: So we really highlighted academic success in every service option that we have.

Kathy: It's all integrated, and, for example, when they come into our early childhood services, we talk about school success. So whatever we're doing with child development, and whether it's in a classroom, whether it's home-based services, that parent is a part of that team in setting goals for their child.

Parent 1: I would like him to get better with his counting because he skips counts.

Parent 2: A little bit more improvement in that area

Teacher 3: Okay.

Parent 2: Which we have been working on at home.

Teacher 3: So actually one of the supporting activities I have is a game

Parent 2: Yes

Teacher 3: So, it works on number recognition, and then the other thing I tied into this, which he's become very good at anyhow, is patterning.

Kathy: So it's a very integrated approach. Parents are learning skills, becoming their best advocate for their child and hopefully, for successful transition onto public school. We'll get ready with the joint leadership team meeting between Chautauqua Opportunities and Dunkirk City Schools.

Narrator: Partnerships with school systems have become incredibly valuable.

Tammy Racino: It really has been an eye opener, because we're seeing that there're some things that we're missing in our curriculum. We looked at what you were sharing with your kindergarten children's families, and we decided that we needed to adopt something similar.

Judy Diem: The Head Start program has their own data system that we work together to build, and the key thing about that is that, it uses the same coding system that we have — We do have every item outlined here on the scan sheet. So it couldn't give us a language in which we start to say, you know, how did they do in preschool with this. What worked with these kids? Now we have a common language that we could take further into school age. In developing this assessment system, we now have reads on kids in all of the Head Start domains. We're able to then, with principals and teachers, to increase the dialogue about what we see in front of us, what it means. It sort of evolved through a continual conversation, and we're not done yet, but at least we now have an ability now to share the data. We now have something to share.

Teacher 4: Let me tell you that Kindergarten teachers were very excited to finally start receiving data, so they kind of get a read on their kids coming into them, before they even start.

Judy: I just believe that at the Head Start level, that that's where the real power is to the success of these kids.

Narrator: Another part of Chautauqua's engagement is building family strengths in a community environment.

Kathy: We really build leadership and advocacy skills and civic skills. So part of the way that we do that is we hold community events. What's happening with dads, and how can we, perhaps, increase some additional services with you.

Parent 3: They have the — they bring the fathers to school day. A lot of dads work during the school day, and they don't have the ability to get that time off of work. So it's almost as if they're, it's there, it's offered, but if you don't have that time to or the ability to take that time off, you miss out on that amazing opportunity.

Roberta: So one of the things we've seen is we are diversifying who we see as our community from here, and being together, we are more connected with each other.

Kathy: We do Zumba and health and fitness and movement. [Zumba music and dance] We also have a reading partnership with Suny Fredonia I talk a lot with staff that many of our children we have in the program for three and a half hours a day, and to truly impact that child, we get to impact the family.

Narrator: It's about engaging families and developing parents as leaders and advocates as well.

Kathy: We're hoping to build those skills, which is critical, especially for Head Start parents and families. For lifelong skills that they'll have to be an advocate and an active member in their community.

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