

Build Strengths-based Relationships



Orientation

Learning extension activities will help you deepen your knowledge about family engagement. These activities can be used to support your work daily or as part of a long-term goal. The activities in this guide provide ideas for reflection and opportunities to practice skills learned in the family engagement modules.

How to Use This Guide

Activities are designed for early childhood learning and care professionals including family child care providers, teachers, administrators, coaches, home visitors, and librarians. Each activity can be used:

- **Individually** for self-study, self-reflection, and integrating family engagement practices into your work
- **With a partner** to learn about, explore, and reflect on implementing family engagement in your setting
- **With a group** as part of staff meetings, association events, or workshops to learn and reflect together about family engagement

Activities in This Guide

1. What Happens Next?
2. The Strategies Game
3. Simulation Variations

This guide focuses on the value of using strengths-based relationships and strategies for building relationships with families. The following activities focus on applying the three strategies: Use a Strengths-based Approach, Listen Actively, and Take Informed Action.



1. What Happens Next?

This activity can be repeated using different scenarios and examples.

Resources You Will Need

- Scenarios Handout—You can also learn more about these scenarios in Module 2, Unit 1: Use a Shared Approach, Unit 2: Active Listening, and Unit 3: Take Informed Action.
- Tip Sheets:
 - Use a Strengths-based Approach
 - Listen Actively
 - Take Informed Action

You may also find If you completed the e-learning units in Module 2, you may also find your journals from those units helpful:

- Module 2 Unit 1: My Family Engagement Journal - Use a Strengths-based Approach
- Module 2 Unit 2: My Family Engagement Journal - Listen Actively
- Module 2 Unit 3: My Family Engagement Journal - Take Informed Action

Time: 30–45 minutes

How to Use This Learning Extension

- **Individually**
Complete the activity steps, including the journal reflections and questions in steps 4 and 5. Reflect on what you learned or discovered.

• With a Partner

Option 1: Complete activity steps 1 and 2 individually. Discuss the guiding questions in step 4 with a partner.

Option 2: Choose one of the options listed in step 2 and complete it with a partner. Reflect together using the questions in step 4. How are your responses different or the same? What are some things you learned from your discussion? Reflect together on what you learned.

• With a Group

As a group, complete step 1 and proceed with the following steps:

- Share responses to the questions in step 2.
- Have group members continue the conversation by role-playing the interaction with a partner, and have partners reflect on their experiences role-playing using the questions in step 4.
- To conclude, engage in a group discussion using the guiding questions in step 4 and reflection in step 5.

Activity Directions

STEP 1

Choose a scenario from the scenarios options or continue to work with a family you identified in your My Family Engagement Journals. Review the scenario or your example.

STEP 2

Imagine that you are having the next conversation with the family.

- Reflect on:
 - Your personal and cultural perspectives
 - The family's individual and cultural perspectives

- Inquire using these questions:
 - What came up for you, both positive and negative?
 - How might these feelings or reactions influence your relationship with the family?
- Choose a Strengths-based Attitude to help you use a Strengths-based Approach. How will you use the Strengths-based Attitude you chose to help you focus on the family's strengths?
- Using the Relationship-based Practice as your guide, what will you say or do when interacting with this family?
- Reflect on how you think the family will respond.

STEP 3

Continue to use the strategies and tools to work with this interaction by journaling, role-playing with a partner, or working through what you will say and how you think the family might respond with a group.

STEP 4

Reflect on this interaction with these guiding questions:

- What did you discover about this family?
- Was there a time during this interaction you felt went well? What happened during the interaction to indicate it went well?
- What do you think this interaction was like for the family?

STEP 5

Reflect on what you did and learned as part of your ongoing professional development.

SCENARIOS OPTIONS

Grandma Transitions Baby to Caregiver



You can locate this video in the Quality Counts California Family Engagement Toolkit videos.

Grandma is transitioning her grandbaby to a caregiver. The baby has been out sick, so the two talk about that as well as a trip that Grandma will be taking.

Serena, John, and Ally's Story

Serena is working with Sue, John, and their daughter, Ally, who is eight months old. Ally started in Serena's program last week and cries for about 15 minutes when Sue and John leave in the morning. Sue and John have been asking Serena questions and giving her advice on what to do. Everyone is feeling stressed.

Andrea, Matt, and Mia's Story

Andrea works with Matt and his daughter, Mia, who is three years old. Yesterday, when asked to join the group, Mia threw blocks across the room. Matt didn't respond. He was looking at his cell phone. Andrea is worried someone might get hurt. When she spoke to Matt, he just shrugged and said, "I needed to check something on my phone ... wait, what?"

Liu, Sheenah, Connor, and Asher's Story

Liu works with Sheenah and her two children, Connor, who is 4 years old, and Asher, who is 12 months old. Sheenah didn't finish school and is determined her boys will. Last time Liu met with them, the children had tablets with games and videos on them. Sheenah shared she is excited about what they will learn from these games and videos. She told Liu they use them all the time. Liu is worried about how much time the boys are spending playing games and watching videos.

2. The Strategies Game

This activity can be repeated using different conversation starters, strategies, and tools.

Resources You Will Need

- Conversation Starters
- Tip Sheets:
 - Use a Strengths-based Approach
 - Listen Actively
 - Take Informed Action

Time: 30–60 minutes

How to Use This Learning Extension

- **Individually**
Complete the activity steps, including the journal reflections and questions in step 4.
- **With a Partner**
Complete steps 1 and 2 individually. Then, complete steps 3 and 4 with a partner. As you discuss the guiding questions in step 4 with a partner. As you discuss the questions, reflect on the strategy or tool you and your partner selected in step 3. Take turns selecting a conversation starter and discussing the questions.
- **With a Group**
As a group, complete steps 1 and 2 and proceed with the following steps:
 - Have each person in the group select a conversation starter and choose a strategy and tool.
 - Ask each person to share their reflections using the questions from step 4.

- Ask each person in the group to quietly reflect on and note their responses to the questions in step 4. Then have a whole-group discussion using the questions in step 4.
- To conclude, ask each person to complete step 5 and share their response with someone else in the group.

Activity Directions

STEP 1

Review the Conversation Starters handout and add examples of what families have said to you, from your own experiences.

STEP 2

Cut up the conversation starters so there is one on each slip of paper, and put them in a container.

STEP 3

Select a conversation starter from the container. Review what the family is saying. Using the tip sheets, choose a strategy and tool you want to try out.

STEP 4

Reflect on what you will do or say to use the strategy and tool you selected.

- What will you do to help you focus on strengths?
- What will you say or do to respond to what this family said?
- How do you think the family will respond to what you say or do?

STEP 5

Reflect on what you did and learned as part of your ongoing professional development.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Review the five examples below of what families might say and add your own examples in the spaces provided. Once you have a list of at least eight conversation starters, cut the conversation starters so there is one on each slip of paper. Fold each slip and put them in a container to draw from during the activity.

- Juan used to eat everything we gave him. Now, he only wants to eat green beans. I'm worried that he isn't getting enough to eat.
- I'm exhausted. We didn't get any sleep last night because Crystal kept getting up.
- Michael was really naughty last night. We asked him to sit at the table at least three times. I ended up putting him in timeout. He just doesn't listen!

- What happened today? Mia's shirt is covered in dirt! We are headed to Grandma's house and I can't take her looking like this.
- All George does is play all day. I want him to learn his ABCs and counting here. This will help him get ready for school.

3. Simulation Variations

Resources You Will Need

- Module 2 Simulations:
 - Practice: Building Relationships with Families
 - Practice: Starting with Strengths
- Tip Sheets:
 - Use a Strengths-based Approach
 - Listen Actively
 - Take Informed Action

Time: 30 – 45 minutes

How to Use This Learning Extension

- **Individually**

Choose one of the options listed in the activity directions. Complete the option you chose. Then, in your journal, reflect on the questions listed under the option you selected.

- **With a Partner**

Choose one of the options listed in the activity directions. You and your partner can choose the same option, or you can choose different options to work with. If you choose the same option, complete the activity together and then reflect on the questions listed under the option you selected with your partner. If you each choose a different option, complete the activities individually. Then meet to debrief what you each learned and how you will use that in your work with families. Complete step 2 with your partner.

- **With a Group**

As a group, complete the activities under each option. If your group is large, consider working on the activity in small groups or individually

before coming together to share and discuss their learning. End by having each member complete step 2 and share with another person.

Activity Directions

STEP 1

Choose one of the options below to continue using the simulations in this module to support your family engagement work. You can return to these activities repeatedly for different experiences as many times as you would like to deepen your practice.

Option 1

Intentionally make choices throughout the simulation that you feel aren't the best options; what do you notice? Reflect on:

- Your personal and cultural perspectives
- The family's individual and cultural perspectives
- What you discovered and how it might influence your relationship with this family if you worked with them
- What you would do to re-engage with this family based on what you learned

Option 2

Role-play with a partner what happens next in the simulation scenario. One partner can take the role of the professional, and the other can take the role of the parent.

- Select a strategy and tool to try.
- Try out the strategy and tool.
- Reflect on what happened and what you discovered.

Option 3

Work with the simulation and pause each time the provider in the simulation reflects.

- Journal your own reflections about what is happening at those times.
- Review your reflections and identify how you will use what you discover to inform your own work with families.

Option 4

Complete the simulation and review your Performance Dashboard at the end of the simulation.

- What did you discover about the strategies and using them to build a strengths-based relationship with the family in the simulation?
- Note the strategies and tools you feel you used well and which ones you have opportunities to improve.
- How will you use what you discovered about applying the strategies in the simulations in your own work with families?

STEP 2

Reflect on what you experienced and learned as part of your ongoing professional development.