

A Child's First Teacher

When a child is born, he or she already has many teachers! Parents, guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, neighbors... and the list goes on. This is because from the time children are born, they are learning...every moment of every day. Even as newborns, they are absorbing everything that is going on around them. They learn by using their senses as they build critical bonds with parents/family members.

So... why is this important? Because as a provider, it is very important for you to understand and recognize that parents/guardians/families are a child's first teacher. While you may come into the picture shortly after a child is born as his/her caregiver, a child's parents/guardians and family will ALWAYS know their child best. Understanding and appreciating this concept sets the stage for you to build upon what parents/caregivers share about their children. It also sets the stage for you and parents/guardians/families to become a team which supports, guides and engages the child.

This guide is designed to help you recognize build positive, goal-oriented relationships with parent/guardians and families. We will discuss the differences between parent involvement and family engagement. There is a difference! We will also help you better understand how you can encourage parent involvement and family engagement in your program. This involves partnering with parents/families in many different ways. There are helpful tools built into the Gee Whiz curriculum you can use to address both parent involvement and family engagement. This guide is a key tool in this process as well. Please take time to read it in its entirety!

Also, be sure to keep in mind that ALL families are unique and special. Sometimes, we have our own personal ideas about what a "family" looks like. Just remember that the definition "family" is going to be different for different families. You will need to take these different definitions of "family" into consideration as you strive to increase parent involvement and family engagement. It is simple. Just embrace the fact that ALL families are wonderful, special and unique and ALL parents/guardians truly want what is best for their children!

