



Family Partnership Engagement Activity

Description:

This activity guides practitioners to engage families and caregivers of youth with disabilities. The goal is to build trust, gather family input, and co-create a family-honoring event that encourages community connection and self-advocacy.

Materials:

1. Family/Caregiver Needs Assessment Form
2. Event Planning Checklist
3. Follow-Up Communication Template
4. Interpreters or translated materials as needed

Objectives:

1. Build relationships with families/caregivers to increase trust and effective communication.
2. Identify family needs and priorities through a culturally sensitive needs assessment.
3. Plan and implement a community event honoring families while teaching target skills.
4. Develop follow-up plans to maintain engagement and continuity of supports.

Purpose:

Family engagement is a key factor in improving outcomes for youth with disabilities. In areas with limited awareness or support, intentional partnership with families builds empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. This activity supports practitioners in implementing strategies that strengthen home-school collaboration and enhance families' capacity to advocate for their child.

Steps:

1. Coordinate and Build Relationships
 - a. Identify and personally invite families and caregivers.
 - b. Establish rapport through home visits or informal meetings.
 - c. Use respectful language and seek to understand cultural norms and family roles.
2. Conduct a Family Needs Assessment
 - a. Use the assessment form to identify needs, strengths, and priorities.
 - b. Focus on barriers (transportation, communication, access to services) and family goals.
 - c. Summarize findings to inform event planning.
3. Plan a Family Honor and Self-Advocacy Event
 - a. Collaborate with families and community partners to design the event.
 - b. Include opportunities for storytelling, recognition, and learning practical advocacy strategies.
 - c. Teach a simple self-advocacy model

4. Host the Event
 - a. Begin by recognizing caregivers' efforts and cultural contributions.
 - b. Facilitate small group discussions to share experiences and strengths.
 - c. Provide accessible resources and demonstrate advocacy tools.
5. Follow Up with Families
 - a. Within two weeks, contact families to thank them and check on progress.
 - b. Offer individualized guidance, connect to resources, and gather feedback.
 - c. Record next steps and identify ongoing engagement opportunities.

Context:

This activity can be adapted for schools, NGOs, or community-based programs. It emphasizes family empowerment and cross-cultural understanding. Practitioners should work with interpreters, use visual supports, and adapt communication based on literacy levels. The approach should value each family's experience, honor their expertise, and create a sustainable support network.

Rubric:

Area	Developing	Beginner	Proficient
1. Understanding Family Engagement & Its Importance	Can describe family engagement generally but not its purpose.	Explains at least one reason family engagement improves outcomes (e.g., achievement, continuity).	Explains multiple benefits from the slides (achievement, attendance, SEL, continuity, graduation) and connects them to their child's experience.
2. Identifying Barriers & Strengths (Needs Assessment)	Names one basic concern or barrier.	Identifies several barriers (language, access, stigma) and at least one strength.	Thoroughly identifies barriers AND strengths and links them to solutions or supports discussed in the session.
3. Communication Skills (Asking Questions + 4-Line Script)	Uses parts of the script or question routine with prompting.	Uses full script with moderate independence to communicate child needs.	Confidently uses the script, adapts it to real situations, and practices culturally responsive communication.
4. Home Learning Routines (Story Reading + Homework Routine)	Attempts at least one routine with support.	Practices all routines with some independence (story reading, homework plan).	Successfully applies routines at home and adapts them to family culture and environment.

5. Follow-Up & Resource Use	Attends a session but does not complete follow-up or access supports.	Completes paper follow-up or uses at least one resource/strategy learned.	Regularly completes follow-ups, engages with resources, and advocates for needs using strategies from the session.
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Modified Activity Examples (Post Needs Assessment)

“Bring a Dish & Share”

- Families bring a simple homemade dish (or attend without bringing).
- Everyone shares a short story about their child: “One thing my child loves/does well.”
- This reduces stigma, builds trust, and creates a warm, non-formal environment.

Settings where this can occur:

Community center
Local restaurant (back room)
Someone’s home
Playground shelter
Home visit (if culturally appropriate)

“How to Ask Questions”

Parents learn a simple 3-step script for communicating with teachers:

1. I want to understand...
2. What does this mean for my child?
3. What can I do at home?

Role-play with a partner or practitioner.

“Reading a Story at Home”

1. Practitioner models how to read a picture book:
 - Point to pictures
 - Ask 1 simple question
 - Let the child turn the page
2. Parents practice with each other.

“How to Get Homework Done” Routine

Introduce a 3-step home routine:

1. Same time every day
2. Two choices (pencil or marker, table or floor)
3. Praise effort, not accuracy
4. Short practice: families create a 3-item homework routine for their home.

Communication Skill Practice With Practitioners

Parents practice a 4-line structured communication script:

1. My goal for my child is...

2. To support this, we need...
3. The help/resources I know about are...
4. Can we arrange ____ by ____?

Follow-Up Plan

Each parent receives a paper follow-up slip:

“What I tried this week...”

- I read a story with my child
- I practiced the homework routine
- I used the communication script
- Questions I still have: _____

They return it at the next session or send it through the child’s backpack.

Note:

- Use plain and simple terms, so families are not overwhelmed with ‘jargon’
- Choose locations where families naturally feel comfortable (community center, home, restaurant).
- Use activities relevant to their daily lives (reading, homework, asking questions) instead of formal workshops.
- Respect cultural norms around food, home visits, and community gatherings.
- Consider grandparents, siblings, and extended family as key caregivers.