Chapter 8 Engaging with families and working in partnership

Resources

[Link 8.1: *The Future of Families*](https://youtu.be/yLir3pHD3kI?t=1=)

In this TEDx Talk, *The Future of Families: Four Discoveries that Change Everything*, George Carey takes a closer look at four changes in families, their impact on children, how they are changing the future of families and the future of our societies worldwide. According to Carey, a new generation of millennial parents have replaced the family hierarchy with a family web.

[Link 8.2: *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*](https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/research-findings/annual-statistical-report-2015)

Read the *Growing Up in Australia* LSAC Annual Statistical Report for 2015. In particular, examine ‘Chapter 3 – Diversity, complexity and change in children’s households’.

[Link 8.3: *The Whittington Family: Ryland’s Story*](https://youtu.be/yAHCqnux2fk?t=2)

This video from the Whittington family is a story of a child, Ryland, who experienced gender change. As you view this thought-provoking story, consider how you would respectfully and sensitively support the Whittington family if they were a family in your early childhood learning and care community.

Links 8.4: Cultural competency resources

Thoughtful reading of the following documents and resources provides you the broad Australian framework for understanding your professional role in instilling, developing and practising respect for Indigenous perspectives, cultures and languages.

* [*Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (DEEWR)](https://docs.education.gov.au/node/2632). Note Principle 4 on page 13, particularly the last paragraph. Note the explanation of cultural competence on page 16.
* [*The Educator's Guide to The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (DEEWR)](https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-australia). Offers a valuable resource in Section 7, p. 24.
* [*Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture Competence – The Journey for Educators: Growing Competence in working with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures* (Department for Education and Child Development, SA)](http://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/persepctives_on_aboriginal_torres_strait_islander_cultural_competence.pdf?acsf_files_redirect.). Examine your skills, knowledge and attitudes by reading the further explanations. Which point on the learning journey are you at? Reflect and respond to the questions and learn from colleagues. The additional resources suggested will also be helpful for you.
* [*The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Services Australia)](https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration). Read through the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (2019), which underpins the Australian Curriculum. Note the sections outlining the commitments of all Australian Governments: ‘Developing Stronger Partnerships’ on page 10; ‘Strengthening Early Childhood Education’ on page 12, in particular, the emphasis on support for Indigenous children and families; and ‘Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential’ on page 16.
* [Australian Curriculum: General Capabilities (ACARA)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/intercultural-understanding). The Australian Curriculum identifies seven general capabilities, which include Intercultural Understanding.
* [Australian Curriculum: Intercultural Understanding learning continuum (ACARA)](https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/General_capabilities_-_ICU_-_learning_continuum.pdf). Also explore the ‘Intercultural Understanding learning continuum’. You might even like to highlight your own capability on the continuum.
* [Reconciliation Action Plan (Early Childhood Australia)](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/reconciliation). Developed with extensive consultation and support from the community, the Early Childhood Australia (ECA*) Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan: Embed, Enable and Strive* (2018–20) functions as a platform of values and principles from which ECA can help advance reconciliation in our communities, and provide leadership and support to the early childhood education and care professionals it represents.

Also explore the following videos:

* [Cultural Competency (ECA Learning Hub)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wgwEt5pV8k). This is the first of a three-part video series, all of which available on YouTube. In part 1, Jo Goodwin and Judy Radich discuss cultural competency and how our own identity and culture impact on our daily interactions with families and children. Part 2 takes into account the past history of Aboriginal Australia and the process of moving forward and engaging in a process of true Reconciliation. Part 3 looks at the Quality Improvement Plan and how to document your progress in cultural competency.
* [Australian parents from different cultures (Raising Children Network Australia)](https://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/working-with-parents/cultural-diversity/different-cultures-videos). Migrant parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds share their experiences of parenting and raising children in Australia. They also talk about speaking two languages and language barriers, drawing on diverse parenting traditions, feeling isolated and getting involved in local communities.

Guided responses to review questions

1. As you think about how best to understand the concept of family, do you favour the views and assumptions of sociologists, psychologists or economists? Explain your answer.

It would be optimal to favour all of these approaches – that is, to take an eclectic approach where you bring the views and assumptions of sociology, psychology and/or economists depending on the circumstance.

1. Describe three practices you will implement to establish positive and collaborative relationships with families.

Practices focused on the establishment of a relationship with a family would include: listening to and respecting each family’s expectations and views about their involvement; developing culturally appropriate and responsive communication strategies; and sharing your philosophy and other important information about the early childhood service or school learning environment.

1. Draw upon what you have learnt in this chapter and complete the following Statement of Agreement (adapted from McDonald, O’Byrne & Prichard, 2015) to include in a family-centred handbook.

* We agree to be honest and respectful. In practice, you will see …
* We agree to accept that families have different ways of doing and seeing things. In practice, you will hear …
* We agree to be flexible. In practice, you will experience …
* We agree to keep personal information private. This means …
* We agree to do what we say we are going to do. In practice, you will notice …
* We agree to be welcoming to everyone. In practice, you will feel …
* We understand that things don’t always go to plan when we disagree. When this happens …
* We agree to always to be positive role models for your children. In practice, you will see …

In practice, you will see teachers engaging respectfully with all children, families and colleagues. You will hear teachers recounting back to a parent what they have been told to ensure accuracy and to acknowledge their point of view. You will experience a warm welcome at any time throughout the day. This means your confidentiality is protected.

You will notice the philosophy underpinning the program enacted in the everyday life of the early learning environment. You will feel a sense of belonging. When this happens, there are clear and respectful processes for addressing disagreements. You will see the actions and use of language to be appropriate with children and between adults.

1. Consider this scenario.

**Teacher:** Iziah is always talking and disrupts the other children during the daily literacy rotation activities.

**Parent:** Really? But I have spoken with her music, science and HPE teachers and they seem to think Iziah is very focused. They say she collaborates well and is a very motivated learner.

**Teacher:** Do you not believe what I have told you? I don’t know how she behaves in other classes … But it’s true in my class.

**Parent:** I think she finds your early learning environment boring.

Rephrase this teacher–parent communication and introduce steps to attend to and resolve the conflict.

The set of questions in the ‘resolving conflict’ section of this chapter promotes reflective thinking capacities and problem-solving. Begin with an open mind and respectful environment and seek to understand and clarify the needs and concerns of all involved, including Iziah. Provide and seek support and confirm ongoing communication strategies. Developing options and mutual agreements may happen early in this process.

Reference

McDonald, M., O’Byrne, M. & Prichard, P. (2015*). Using the Family Partnership Model to Engage Communities: Lessons from Tasmanian Child and Family Centres*. Melbourne, Vic.: Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children’s Research Centre and the Royal Children’s Hospital. Retrieved from [www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/150130\_Using-the-Family-Partnership-Model-to-engage-communities\_Report.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/150130_Using-the-Family-Partnership-Model-to-engage-communities_Report.pdf).