Increasing Parent Engagement in Children's Literacy

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO INFORM THE DESIGN OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

R4D RESULTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

CENTER FOR EDUCATION INNOVATIONS

PR#JECT LITERACY

Acknowledgements and Contributors

Table of Contents

Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout the guide. These definitions are by no means prescriptive but are defined for the sake of mutual understanding and to avoid confusion.

Home learning environment: Conditions in and around the home, as well as interactions a child has at home with different family members and caregivers.

Human-centered design: A process that starts with the people you are designing for and ends with solutions tailored to their needs. *To learn more: http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design*.

Literacy: The ability to read and write.

Literacy development: A series of skills that result in a deep understanding of text (the ability to read), beginning with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words.

Native language (L1): Language that a person has been exposed to from birth, also known as an individual's first language or mother tongue. In some countries, native language refers to the language of one's ethnic group rather than one's first language.

Parent engagement program: Interventions or services aimed at providing information, education, skills, and support on child development to parents and caregivers.[1] *Note:* The needs assessment guide uses this definition when referring to parent engagement programs, focusing on those that support parents in engaging in activities related to literacy.

Social network: An individual's network of social interactions and personal relationships.

Target population: A group of individuals that a program is designed to serve.

Technological literacy: The ability to use and understand technology.

Theory of change: An approach for planning and evaluation that is used to promote social change. The method defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary pre-conditions. It is the thinking behind how a particular intervention will bring about lasting change.
To learn more: https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/what-thing-called-theory-change.

---

[1] Daly, M. et. al (2015). *Family and Parenting Support: Policy and Provision in a Global Context.* UNICEF Office of Research.

Introduction

Today, approximately 1 in 10 youth globally still struggle to read and write.[2] People who struggle with literacy are more likely to live in poverty, lack education, have difficulty finding a job, and miss out on opportunities to participate fully in society. Greater parent and caregiver engagement are needed to tackle this global challenge. **Research shows that positive parent engagement at home and in school can lead to improved literacy outcomes.**[3]

This needs assessment guide is a series of one-page questionnaires to help literacy practitioners better understand the various factors affecting parent engagement in children's literacy. Literacy practitioners are well positioned to promote greater parent and caregiver engagement in children's learning, but their efforts often fall short. They may struggle to fully empower parents, recognize household constraints, take advantage of existing networks, or overcome a general lack of parental enthusiasm and willingness to engage. This guide was developed in an effort to address these challenges.

What is parent engagement?

Parents and caregivers can support their children's literacy development from an early age and in a variety of ways. Parent engagement activities are commonly divided into two broad categories:[4]

- **Family–school partnerships** are activities that encourage parent–teacher communication and engagement in the school community, such as parents attending school events, volunteering in the classroom, or communicating with teachers about children's academic progress.

- **Home–based learning** activities happen when parents actively engage with children's learning at home, including talking, playing or joint reading with a child, or reviewing a child's homework.

NOTE: Sometimes a child's primary caregiver may not be his or her biological parent. The guide uses the terms *parent* and *caregiver* interchangeably, referring to all caregivers regardless of age, gender, or family relation to the child.

What is the purpose of the guide?

This needs assessment guide aims to help literacy practitioners increase parent engagement in children's literacy development. It includes key questions and pro-tips to guide practitioners in gathering information on the different factors influencing how parents engage with children's learning. **The intended result is for users of the guide to analyse the information they collect and use it to develop and implement tailored parent engagement programs that parents will engage with and benefit from.**

What this guide IS:

- A series of one-page questionnaires with guiding questions, practical advice, and resources to help literacy practitioners gather information to make more informed decisions about their parent engagement efforts

What this guide IS NOT:

- A detailed guide on how to design a parent engagement program
- A guide on how to evaluate the impact of a parent engagement program
- A tool for assessing the literacy level of parents and caregivers
- A tool to improve the literacy skills of parents and caregivers

---

[2] UNESCO (2017). *Literacy Rates Continue to Rise from One Generation to the Next.* UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
[3] National Center for Family Literacy (2006). *The Effect of Family Literacy Interventions on Children's Acquisition of Reading: From Kindergarten to Grade 3.* National Institute for Literacy.
[4] Ibid.

The following icons are used throughout the guide to represent recommended data collection tools:

Observation. A systematic way of watching people in their natural environments. Observing a setting or engagement can help you understand individual and group behavior. Observations can be done informally or using a formal checklist.

Desk review. A desk review can help you understanding existing research on a topic and could include analysing data collected by a third party, reading reports by research institutions or organizations, or scanning news articles.

Survey or questionnaire. A survey or questionnaire can help you gather information on a specific set of questions. Participants can either provide written or verbal responses to the survey questions. This method is less time-intensive than interviews or focus groups but provides limited opportunities to follow-up on specific responses.

Key informant interviews (KII). Interviews allow you to collect information from a wide range of people, including those who have first-hand knowledge of the community. Interviews can help you understand people's reactions, thoughts, and opinions.

Focus group discussions (FGD). A focus group discussion is an in-depth interview with a group of people who share something in common. This type of group interview is discussion-based and can help generate new ideas.

Community workshop. A community workshop is a valuable way to not only gather information about your target population, but also collaborate with parents to design solutions. An example of a community workshop is included on pg. 10 of this guide.

Who will find the guide useful?

The guide was developed for literacy practitioners who design, implement, and evaluate parent engagement programs, particularly those who engage low or non-literate populations. The information is applicable for all country and cultural contexts.

This tool may be useful to you if:

- You work directly with parents and caregivers on children's literacy or education issues.
- You want to understand the biggest literacy challenges facing your community.
- You are a decision-maker who advocates for policies that impact parents and families.
- You currently implement a program or service that engages parents in children's learning.
- You are interested in designing and/or implementing a program or service that engages parents in children's learning.
- You evaluate the effectiveness or impact of literacy and/or parent engagement programs.

Some users may feel that they already know the answers to the questions in this guide; however, it is still valuable to systematically collect the information. The process can help identify biases or assumptions that could impact the success of parent engagement efforts.

How should the guide be used?

The guide contains six one-page questionnaires to help literacy practitioners assess the broader literacy context of a chosen community, the home learning environment of households, and the caregiver experience of parents within those households. Each questionnaire includes guiding assessment questions, suggestions on data collection methods, and pro-tips from literacy practitioners. Some of the questionnaires also recommend resources where a user can find more information on a specific topic.

Questionnaires can be used in sequential order or individually. Some topics are more technical due to their subject matter, but they all intend to convey practical information to practitioners who do not have specific technical expertise.

Needs Assessment Questionnaires

There are six one-page questionnaires in this section. They aim to help you understand the broader literacy context, home learning environment, and caregiver experience by guiding you through an assessment of:

1. **Cultural and social factors**

2. **Parents' attitudes and beliefs about their role as a parent**

3. **A household's lifestyle patterns and daily routine**

4. **The home learning environment**

5. **A household's use of technology and media consumption**

6. **Parent and caregiver social networks**

When is this information useful to know?

This information is useful to know when designing a new program, throughout implementation of an existing program, or when looking to expand a successful program. It can help you:

- **Select** a target population to serve
- **Identify** ways to reach parents with programming
- **Ensure** the content and delivery method of a program is appropriate for the local context
- **Measure** knowledge, attitudes, and practices before and/or after a program
- **Evaluate** whether a theory of change holds or not

How can you engage the community in collecting this information?

- **Build a team of community members** to review your interview and focus group discussion questionnaires to ensure the questions are appropriate for the local context.
- **Engage and train parents from the community** to help collect information and facilitate conversations with other parents.
- **Conduct interviews** in an informal setting to help encourage participation of parents and community members who may not regularly participate.
- **Facilitate a community workshop** where information can be collected and used to co-design a program alongside parents and community members. An example of a community workshop is included on pg. 10 of this guide. A community workshop template is included on pg. 16.

Cultural and Social Factors

The questions below will help you to gain an in-depth understanding of cultural and social factors that may influence how and when caregivers engage with their children's learning. This information can and should be used to design and implement programs that value the life experience and culture of target populations.

Guiding Questions

1. **What are common family structures in the community?**
   - *What are common living arrangements?*
   - *What are common caregiver arrangements?*

   > **Pro-tip:** There are many ways someone could support a child's literacy development. You want to identify the people who can do that.

2. **What gender norms impact parent engagement in literacy, if any?**
   - *To what extent do parents engage in a child's learning differently based on their gender?*
   - *What barriers may exist for parents based on their gender?*

3. **What other cultural or societal norms may impact parent engagement in literacy?**

   > **Pro-tip:** For example, parents may perceive education to be the responsibility of teachers, or that engaging with a child's education will result in the child disrespecting the parent. Your program will likely need to address these norms.

4. **What is your target population's perception on the value of education?**
   - *What are similar concepts that the community holds? (e.g. cultural learning through word of mouth, folktales, etc.)*

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

- 👁 **Observation**
- 💬 **Key informant interview**
- 👥 **Focus group discussion**
- **Desk review**
- 📋 **Survey or questionnaire**

SPOTLIGHT ON
We Love Reading

JORDAN | We Love Reading (WLR) is a Jordanian non-profit organization dedicated to fostering the love of reading among children in the Middle East. WLR focuses on training and encouraging parents to read aloud to their children and understands first-hand the importance of valuing cultural and social norms when working with parents and caregivers.

Recently, WLR was approached by a university professor who wanted to study the impact of WLR's approach on parent-child relationships. The professor's study involved surveying parents and children about parent-child interactions in the household. After reviewing the initial survey, the WLR team immediately realized that the assumptions of the survey were based on western notions of how parents should interact with and parent their children. The survey did not accurately reflect the caregiver experience in Jordan. For example, one survey question asked whether the father sits on the floor to play with his child. WLR knew most parents would answer "no" to this question. In Jordan, a father is not likely to sit on the floor and play with his child; however, this does not mean the father does not care about his child. He simply shows his love in a different way.

Through a collaborative and iterative process, WLR adapted the survey to be more culturally relevant. This helped ensure that the findings were accurate, but also helped facilitate buy-in from parents and caregivers to WLR's approach. Parents were able to identify for themselves how they could engage with children's learning in a way that was considerate of the cultural and social environment they were familiar with. WLR now has a context-specific tool to assess the impact of their programming.

"We are able to understand the community because we are the community," quotes Rana Dajani, founder of We Love Reading. It is essential to include local perspectives before, during, and after the needs assessment process.

LEARN MORE: *www.welovereading.org*

2 Parents' Attitudes and Beliefs on their Role as a Parent

Understanding how parents interpret the learning process, including their role in it, is key to designing and implementing targeted programs. The questions below will help you identify attitudes and beliefs that could facilitate or hinder the learning process, understand contextual factors that influence these beliefs, and discover gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed.

Guiding Questions

1. **How would the parent describe their role in a child's language and literacy development?**
   - *What do parents see as their role in learning before their child attends school or in preparation for school?*
   - *What does the parent think a child should learn at school vs. at home?*

2. **What concerns does the parent have about engaging with their child's learning, if any?**

3. **What parts of engagement with a child does the parent most enjoy?**
   - *What do they feel they are best at?*

4. **What parts do they find challenging?**
   - *What does the parent believe they can most improve upon?*

5. **What types of educational activities would the parent like to do with their child, but feel they are unable to?**
   - *What prevents them from engaging in these activities?*
   - *What tools or programs does the parent think would help them engage more?*

6. **To what extent has the parent participated in a program focused on early childhood development or literacy before?**
   - *Why did they participate? Why did they not participate?*
   - *What did they like about the program, if anything? What did they not like?*

7. **What existing programs is the parent aware of, if any?**

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

- **Key informant interview**
- **Community workshop**
- **Focus group discussion**

Queen Rania Foundation

AMMAN, JORDAN | Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) is well-known for developing innovative solutions to a wide range of education challenges in Jordan. Their most recent intervention, an online platform intended to raise parental awareness and engagement in early childhood education, was informed by a needs assessment similar to this one. Before piloting the online program, QRF partnered with the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) to assess how mothers in Jordan perceive and understand their role in a child's learning. Their goal was to identify specific behavioral barriers to increased parental engagement and use this information to design their program.

QRF and BIT conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with mothers, teachers, and program facilitators (individuals who work with ministries and non-profit organizations to deliver parent engagement programs). A discussion guide for these interviews was finalized through multiple rounds of feedback to ensure the questions were appropriate for the Jordanian context. The discussion guide was then translated to Arabic. Interview participants came from across Jordan. Some were interviewed at QRF's office in Amman and others were interviewed in their place of work. Here is what QRF and BIT learned:

- **Mothers perceive the home as a space for disciplining children, not learning with them.** QRF's program would need to shift this perspective.
- **Mothers feel overwhelmed with chores.** There was a need to incorporate children's learning into daily chores (e.g. cooking with children).
- **Mothers rely on and use technology.** Mobile phones could be used to deliver child-related programming to parents.
- **Mothers want to engage with their children, but face difficulties planning time to do so.** QRF's program could help parents set aside structured time to help their children learn.
- **Mothers lack support beyond their own mothers and sisters.** There is a need to connect mothers to existing networks or build new ones.

Queen Rania Foundation used this information to target messages that parents and caregivers now receive through mobile phones: messages encouraging and guiding them through the activities offered by QRF's virtual parenting program. QRF described the needs assessment process as invaluable to the design of their program. The program is currently being rigorously tested for impact.

LEARN MORE: *https://www.qrf.org/*

3 A Household's Lifestyle Patterns and Daily Routine

Financial constraints and competing responsibilities can affect if, how, and when parents engage with their children's learning. The questions below will help you better understand these constraints and competing priorities, enabling you to design or adapt a program around them.

Guiding Questions

1. **How many adults (ages 16+) live in the household?**
   - *How many children?*

2. **Where do the parent(s) work, if at all?**
   - *What days and hours do they work?*
   - *What do they do for work?*

3. **Where do other adults in the household work, if at all?**

4. **Which adults does the child spend time with?**
   - *How much time does the child spend with these adults?*

5. **What does the parent's usual day with the child look like?**
   - *What are their activities?*
   - *With whom do they spend time?*
   - *Where do they go together?*

6. **What other responsibilities do parent(s) have outside parenting and formal employment, if any? (e.g. domestic chores, community involvement, etc.)**
   - *When and where do these activities take place?*

   Pro-Tip: If your program is already running, ask parents whether the program offerings (location, time, etc.) are ideal for them. What would they change about when and how the program is offered?

7. **What is the distribution of parenting responsibilities among adults in the household?**

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

👁 **Observation**

💬 **Key informant interview**

📋 **Survey or questionnaire**

TAMALE, GHANA | Tamale Children's Hub is a program run by Child Dream Centre that provides holistic educational services and after-school programs to children and adolescents in northern Ghana. The Hub was established because a handful of literacy practitioners took the time to understand how household constraints impact parent engagement in children's learning.

Growing up in northern Ghana, Simeon Martey, the founder of Child Dream Centre, noticed a concerning pattern in his community. Children were progressing through upper grade levels in school, yet many were not developing fundamental literacy skills. Simeon and two friends began to investigate why this was happening. They went door-to-door speaking to parents and caregivers about daily household routines. What did a parent's usual day with a child look like? What were children doing when they came home from school? When and how were parent's engaging with their children's learning, if at all?

What did Simeon and friends learn? In rural areas in northern Ghana, public schools close in the early afternoon. Because parents and caregivers often work in the afternoon to support their families, children come home to an empty house. Parents possess a strong desire for their children to be engaged in learning after school, but financial constraints prevent parents from actively participating in this learning. Instead of completing homework or reading, a child goes to play with friends and is often asleep by the time a parent arrives home.

What did Simeon and friends do? Recognizing that children needed more structured engagement after school, Child Dream Centre formed Tamale Children's Hub. When children finish school, they go to the Hub where local staff engage children in educational activities. The Hub uses Jolly Phonics digital programs and African children's storybooks to build literacy skills. Tamale Children's Hub recognizes that parents have financial and time constraints that prevent them from engaging after school. The Hub allows parents to concentrate on their work by providing an alternative space for children to stay engaged. In the future, Child Dream Centre hopes to include parents in Tamale Children's Hub activities and provide home learning resources for parents to use on the weekends.

LEARN MORE: *childdreamcentre.org/*

4 The Home Learning Environment

A child's learning is shaped by everyday activities within the home. The questions below will help you gather information on aspects of the home environment that could promote or inhibit positive parent engagement and learning in this space. You can use this information to identify home-based activities or tools that parents can use to promote greater learning at home.

Guiding Questions

1. **To what extent are parent(s) and other household members literate?**
   - *What is their literacy level?*
   - *How and when did they learn to read and write?*

2. **What language is spoken at home?**
   - *What is the child's native language?*
   - *What is the native language(s) of parent(s) and other householder members?*

3. **What is the language of instruction in school?**

   Pro-Tip: The language of instruction in a child's school may be different than the language spoken at home. For information on how to support bilingual and multilingual families, please explore the Additional Resources listed below.

4. **What additional language(s) is the child regularly exposed to, if any?**

5. **In what ways do parent(s) or other household members talk to or converse with the child?**

   Pro-Tip: Research shows that early exposure to vocabulary is crucial for literacy development. Even if the child is too young to converse, storytelling can be a useful tool.

6. **To what extent do parent(s) and other household members already engage with the child's learning?**
   - *What activities do they do together?*
   - *What activities would they like to do more of, if any?*
   - *What prevents them from doing these activities now?*

   Pro-Tip: *Include children's perspectives.* You can ask questions such as, "What do you do with your parents (or sister, grandmother, aunt, etc.) at home? Who plays with you? Does anyone read to or with you? Who helps you with your schoolwork, if anyone?"

7. **What reading material is available at home, if any?**
   - *What reading material is available outside the home, if any?*

   Pro-Tip: Think about how families and caregivers could generate their own literacy materials as a more cost-effective option for accessing reading materials at home.

8. **To what extent do parent(s) and other household members read with the child?**
   - *If so, how often?*
   - *What types of reading material? (e.g. books, newspapers, recipes, etc.)*

9. **What barriers do parent(s) and other household members face in reading with their child?**

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

- 👁 Observation
- 💬 Key informant interview
- Community workshop
- Focus group discussion
- Desk review
- Survey or questionnaire

Additional Resources

All parent(s) are capable of supporting a child's literacy development, regardless of their own literacy level. See the resources below for ideas on how to involve non-literate or low-literate parents.

- *Early Learning Toolkit, Center for Education Innovations*
- *Resources for Parents, The Communication Trust*
- *Improving the Home Learning Environment, National Literacy Trust*

Sample:
Community Workshop Facilitation Guide

Preparation

Workshop objectives

- Understand the home learning environment within households and equip parents and caregivers with concrete, practical tools they can use to support learning and literacy development at home.

Length of workshop

- 1 hour 45 minutes

Location and time

- 11:00am on Saturday, January 15
  Parks Community Center

Target participants

- 15 low or non-literate parents and caregivers of preschool age children (ages 0-5)

Pre-workshop activities checklist:

☑ **Create** a workshop agenda appropriate for the literacy levels of participants (e.g. rely mostly on visuals when working with low/non-literate participants)

☑ **Organize** a childcare option for participants

☑ **Engage** other parents or community members to help facilitate

☑ **Promote** the workshop in the community

☑ **Prepare** all necessary materials

☑ **Practice** facilitating!

☑ **Discuss** possible follow-up workshops where parents can practice what they have learned with children or share knowledge with other parents

Workshop Agenda

Connect [30 MINUTES]

Welcome everyone and introduce facilitators

Introduce participants

- In pairs, ask participants to share their name and 3 pieces of information about themselves (e.g. number of children, favourite activity, one dream or hope for their family, etc.)
- Participants are then introduced to the larger group by their partners

Establish group norms

- Write down 3-4 group norms on a large piece of paper (e.g. actively participate, listen and keep an open mind, every idea and question are welcome, etc.)
- Ask participants to contribute their own ideas to the list

Introduce workshop

- Explain purpose of the workshop and why this topic is important to discuss
- Sample language: A child's home is a powerful learning environment. Children learn from adults who spend time playing and communicating with them. During the first years of life, significant changes happen in the brain and a child's interaction with their family and the wider community shapes their future. Talking, interacting, and playing with children throughout the day is critical for brain development. YOU are critical to their future. Let's brainstorm how you can be effective.
- Walk through workshop agenda

Ask participants if they have any questions

Materials needed:

- *Paper, markers, tape, snacks*

Learn [45 MINUTES]

Activity 1: *Group brainstorm on home learning opportunities*

- Facilitator defines 'learning opportunity' for the group
- In groups of 3, ask participants to think about what learning opportunities exist or could exist for children in their home. For example, this could include reading to children, cooking with children, telling stories before bedtime, and more. Encourage creativity!
- Ask participants to draw each activity on a piece of paper
- Ask each small group to share their ideas with the larger group, creating one group list

Activity 2: *Always, sometimes, never*

- In different groups of 3, ask participants to categorize the activity drawings into one of the 3 categories;
    1. Activities parents do every day
    2. Activities parents do every once in a while
    3. Activities parents rarely or never do
- Ask participants to share back with the group and discuss any disagreement

Activity 3/Discussion: *Facilitate a conversation around the guiding questions below*

- Which of these activities would participants like to do more of, if any?
- Which of these activities would participants like to do with their child, but feel they are unable to do?
- What prevents them from doing these activities?
- What resources or skills do they feel they need to be able to do more of these activities?

Materials needed:

- *Paper, markers, tape, snacks*

Take Action [30 MINUTES]

Next Steps

- Ask each participant to choose a learning activity that they would feel comfortable trying out in their own household. These can be simple activities such as talking to a child more, asking them questions, telling them a story before bedtime, drawing an animal book together, etc.

    Note: Facilitators should come prepared with a list of possible activities to propose.
- Ask participants to spend the next 1–2 weeks practicing this activity with their children. They should come prepared to share their thoughts on this experience during the next community workshop.

Closing

- Set a time and date for the next workshop
- Thank participants for their time and participation

5 A Household's Use of Technology and Media Consumption

Media and technology can be used in various ways to support parents in engaging with their children's learning. Technological literacy is also an increasingly important skill for children and adults in many societies. The questions below will help you understand a parent's current use of technology and access to media. This information will encourage you to think about if and how you may want to incorporate technology into your programming.

Guiding Questions

1. **What devices (e.g. mobile phone, tablet, computer, television) are used by parent(s), if any?**
   - *What devices are used by the child, if any?*

2. **How do parent(s) or other household members use these devices, if at all?**
   - *What type of content is browsed?*
   - *How often are these devices used in the home? Outside the home?*

3. **How comfortable do parent(s) feel using these devices?**

4. **To what extent do parent(s) have access to the Internet?**
   - *To what extent does the child have access to the Internet?*

5. **What is the cost of electricity for the household?**
   - *What is the cost of data usage?*

Additional Resources

For best practices on incorporating technology or media resources into parent engagement programs, please find the following resources for reference:

- *10 Critical Design Elements for Parent Engagement Technologies, Early Learning Lab*
- *Webinar: Tapping the Potential of NextGen Technology, Early Learning Lab*
- *12 Ways Digital Tools Power Parent Engagement, Pearson*

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

- Observation
- Key informant interview
- Survey or questionnaire

6 Parent and Caregiver Social Networks

Social networks are often where parents and caregivers seek support and advice on parenting. The questions below will help you identify key support systems or personal relationships in a parent's life, including the type of support those interactions provide. As a literacy practitioner, think through how to use these networks as a way to reach parents with a program or service.

Guiding Questions

1. **Who does the parent rely on for support and advice, if anyone?**
   - *Who do they rely on for advice specific to parenting?*
   - *Who does the parent trust most?*

2. **What support does this network provide?**
   - *What does the parent most enjoy or appreciate about this support?*
   - *What support does the parent want to receive but currently does not receive?*

3. **How does the parent communicate with this person or network of people? (e.g. in–person communication, email, social media, WhatsApp, etc.)**

4. **If the parent lacks a supportive network, to what extent are they interested in finding one?**

What data collection tools can be used to collect this information?

- **Key informant interview**
- **Community workshop**
- **Focus group discussion**
- **Survey or questionnaire**

Next Steps

You have used the guide to gather information about the broader literacy context, home learning environment, and caregiver experience. Now what? It is time for you to use the information to make decisions.

Step 1: Record and summarize the information you collected to identify assets, gaps, and needs of parents and the community.

Step 2: Analyse your list of assets, gaps, and needs to develop a list of potential program strategies or areas for improvement.

Step 3: Prioritize those strategies and decide which strategies can be implemented given your time constraints, resources, and other competing priorities.

Guiding Principles for Designing and Implementing Parent Engagement Programs

Engaging parents requires a foundation of trust and mutual respect between practitioners and those they are trying to reach. Observing a set of guiding principles can help build this trust and ensure that programming is high-quality and effective. The authors of the guide propose the following principles as a foundation for engagement, planning, implementation, and evaluation of parent engagement programs:

1. **Keep the parent or caregiver at the center of children's literacy development process.** Their participation is essential.

2. **Empower parents and caregivers to support the literacy development process of their children, even if they are not literate themselves.** Meet parents where they are. Consider their constraints and do not immediately assume they are simply not interested in engaging with their children's learning.

3. **Take a human-centered design approach.** Parents and caregivers are the experts on their needs. Directly involve them in the needs assessment and program design process.

4. **Allow communities to own programs and determine what is included and how they are run.** This can be done by involving parents and caregivers in both the initial design and final evaluation of programs.

5. **Value and respect the communities you serve.** Base programs on a community's way of life, history, and values. Validate and incorporate multiple methods of language and literacy development, such as oral tradition like storytelling, folktales, and narration. Build a program that parents can identify with.

6. **Measure progress in a way that is meaningful to parents and caregivers.** Avoid simply evaluating a program against international benchmarks. Consult with parents and caregivers to learn how the program is impacting them. Work with caregivers to co-design measurement tools that capture impact in a relevant way.

References

- Daly, M. et. al (2015). *Family and Parenting Support: Policy and Provision in a Global Context*. UNICEF Office of Research.

- Designkit.org (n.d.). Design Kit [online] Available at: *https://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design*.

- Dunst, C., Valentine, A., Raab, M., and Hamby, D. (2013). *Relationship between child participation in everyday activities and early literacy and language development*. CELL Reviews, 6(1), Center for Early Literacy Learning, Morganton, NC: Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute.

- Early Learning Toolkit (2019). *Parent Engagement in Learning*. [online] Available at: *https://www.earlylearningtoolkit.org/entry/parent-engagement*.

- Head Start, Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (2018). *Strengths-Based Attitudes* [online] Available at: *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/developing-relationships-families/strength-based-attitudes*.

- HM Government (2018). *Improving the Home Learning Environment: A Behaviour Change Approach*. National Literacy Trust.

- Kalb, G. and van Ours, J.C. (2012). *Reading to Young Children: A Head-Start in Life*. Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. Available at: *https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/about/research/readtoyoungchild.pdf*.

- Marphatia, A., Edge, K., Legault, E. and Archer, D. (2010). *Politics of Participation: Parental Support for Children's Learning and School Governance in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda*. ActionAid.

- National Center for Family Literacy (2006). *The Effect of Family Literacy Interventions on Children's Acquisition of Reading: From Kindergarten to Grade 3*. National Institute for Literacy.

- Olmstead, C. (2013). *Using Technology to Increase Parent Involvement in Schools*. TechTrends 57(6).

- Psr.iq.harvard.edu. (2007). *Questionnaire Design Tip Sheet*. [online] Available at: *https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/book/questionnaire-design-tip-sheet*.

- The Children's Partnership (2010). *Empowering Parents Through Technology* [online]. Available at: *https://www.childrenspartnership.org/research/empowering-parents-through-technology*.

- UNESCO (2017). *Literacy Rates Continue to Rise from One Generation to the Next*. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

- Worldreader (2018). *Leveraging Mobile Technology for Parental Engagement in the Early Years: Findings from the Read to Kids India Pilot 2015-2017*.

Project Partners

Annex 1:
Community Workshop Facilitation Guide Template

Preparation

Workshop objectives

Length of workshop

Location and time

Target participants

Pre-workshop activities checklist:

- ☐ **Create** a workshop agenda appropriate for the literacy levels of participants (e.g. rely mostly on visuals when working with low/non-literate participants)
- ☐ **Organize** a childcare option for participants
- ☐ **Engage** other parents or community members to help facilitate
- ☐ **Promote** the workshop in the community
- ☐ **Prepare** all necessary materials
- ☐ **Practice** facilitating!
- ☐ **Discuss** possible follow-up workshops where parents can practice what they have learned with children or share knowledge with other parents

Workshop Agenda
Connect

Welcome everyone and introduce facilitators

Introduce participants

Establish group norms

Introduce workshop

Ask participants if they have any questions

Materials needed:

Learn

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

Activity 3/Discussion:

Materials needed:

Take Action

Next Steps

Closing