

# One Page Resource: Community Collaboration

## The Connection Between Home and School



A strong connection between home and school is important. For many NM PreK students, the PreK year is their first exposure to formal education. Therefore a proper transition from home to school is essential. Family orientations held early in the year will help families understand their role in the PreK program. Home visits will help teachers learn what each family's goals are for their child and how they can use this information to tailor their curriculum. Children whose families are involved in their education tend to be more successful throughout their educational career.

Teachers also have a responsibility to educate parents about the role of "play" in the classroom. This can be done by inviting parents into the classroom to take part in classroom activities or through classroom displays. A well thought out

and goal based lesson plan posted where families can see will also help educate any visitors about how PreK aged children learn. Here are some ways to connect with families:

- Use arrival and departure times as an opportunity to share information about children.
- Send home newsletters, communication logs, email reminders of classroom activities and other forms of written communication.
- Use family member's skills to make improvements to the classroom and school (landscaping, hemming dress up clothes, painting the classroom, etc)
- Ensure that all paperwork uses language relevant to the families you serve

## Tips for Working/Communicating with Families

- Be Responsive-Families want to understand how their children are being taught and what they are learning
- Make allowances for differences in parents' understanding and knowledge, which are sometimes based on their own educational experiences.
- Establish two-way communication in which parents' feedback is valued as much as the teacher's input.
- Communicate how play is the primary mode of learning for children
- Invite families to observe their children during various opportunities throughout their PreK day so they can discern the value of different teaching strategies

Kumar, R. (2009) *Young Children*

## The Connection Between School and Community

The NM PreK Classroom is an excellent place for children and families to connect to other important resources within the community. PreK administrators should reach out to local community resource programs to establish relationships that will enrich the lives of PreK families. PreK administrators and teachers can improve the quality of services provided in their community by educating other professionals about the needs of children and families in their area. NM PreK should be viewed not only as an opportunity to educate children but also as an opportunity to educate families and other community members about the growth and development of children. Early childhood professionals have the important job of empowering families to be their child's strongest advocate.

Here are a few ways to connect to the community around you:

- Hold regular meetings with other PreK teachers/ administrators to discuss the needs of the children and families you serve.
- Contact local Head Start programs, early intervention programs, food banks, housing resource centers, and health professionals to learn more about the services they provide.
- Educate yourself and others about funding available to children and families and be an active advocate for the needs of these funds in your community.
- Develop a relationship with Kindergarten teachers and administrators at the local public schools. Work together to make the transition from PreK to Kindergarten an easy one for children and their families.

