

Evidence-based practices for family engagement  
Early childhood education and care services with 3 to 5 year-olds











## Where to next?

Consider which of the scenarios in this table most closely resembles your current practices:

We're already using some or all of the <b>promising</b> approaches	We're currently using some or all of the <b>not promising</b> approaches	We're just <b>starting</b> to engage with families at my service	We're using <b>other</b> approaches not covered in this practice guide
<p>That's great – the evidence suggests these are good approaches to try. You could focus on embedding, sustaining and monitoring quality practice. For example, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly consider implementation barriers and enablers — that is, the factors that are helping and hindering family engagement.</li> <li>• Focus more on tailoring approaches to meet the diverse and unique needs of families.</li> <li>• Share your approaches, challenges and successes with colleagues, supervisors or other ECEC service directors.</li> <li>• Monitor and review how these promising approaches are going – for example, by observing how children are learning, and asking families, colleagues and children about what is and is not working, and what adjustments could be made to improve outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p>There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to family engagement, and findings in the research evidence may change as further studies are carried out or approaches are tested in more settings. However, based on the best available research evidence, these 'not promising' approaches are less likely to be successful and may even have negative impacts on children's learning and development. In this context, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely monitor how the approach is going in general and for specific groups of children and their families – for example, by observing how children are learning, and asking families, colleagues and children.</li> <li>• Review the evidence you have collected to see if the approach is giving you a good chance of success.</li> <li>• Consider trialling some of the promising approaches.</li> </ul>	<p>Family engagement in children's learning has been linked with positive outcomes for children's early learning and development, so it's great that you're looking for strategies to try. You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with colleagues to identify the main needs of families in your service.</li> <li>• Select which one/s of the promising approaches you could first focus on to meet these needs.</li> <li>• Monitor how this approach is going – for example, by observing how children are learning, and asking families, colleagues and children.</li> <li>• Ask colleagues, supervisors or directors for feedback or to discuss challenges that arise.</li> <li>• Browse AERO's <a href="#">family engagement resources</a>.</li> </ul>	<p>Family engagement can involve many different activities. Your approach may not yet have been tested by researchers, or may have been tested in studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria for this guide. You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor how your approach is going – for example, by observing how children are learning, and asking families, colleagues and children.</li> <li>• Try some of the promising approaches you haven't tried already.</li> <li>• Review the evidence for your approach using AERO's <a href="#">research use resources</a>.</li> </ul>



## For more information

For further guidance on engaging with families, see AERO's [family engagement practice guides and resources](#).



## Endnotes

- 1 In this practice guide, 'early learning and development' is used as an umbrella term to describe outcomes reported in the included studies. These studies reported on a range of child outcomes, including outcomes described as 'academic outcomes', 'academic behaviours' and 'social-behavioural competence'. These were measured through, for example, language assessments and measures of engagement/persistence and social skills: Smith, T. E., Sheridan, S. M., Kim, E. M., Park, S., & Beretvas, S. N. (2020). The effects of family-school partnership interventions on academic and social-emotional functioning: A meta-analysis exploring what works for whom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32(2), 511–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09509-w>
- 2 For example, there is a need for more replication studies to test approaches in different contexts, and to better understand how family engagement approaches work when they involve multiple strategies operating at the same time.
- 3 Smith et al. (2020).
- 4 Smith et al. (2020).
- 5 Smith et al. (2020).  
Sheridan, S. M., Knoche, L. L., Boise, C. E., Moen, A. L., Lester, H., Edwards, C. P., Schumacher, R., & Cheng, K. (2019). Supporting preschool children with developmental concerns: Effects of the Getting Ready intervention on school-based social competencies and relationships. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 48, 303–316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.03.008>
- 6 See, B. H., Gorard, S., El-Soufi, N., Lu, B., Siddiqui, N., & Dong, L. (2021). A systematic review of the impact of technology-mediated parental engagement on student outcomes. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 26(3–4), 150–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2021.1924791>  
Robinson-Smith, L., Menzies, V., Cramman, H., Wang, Y., Fairhurst, C., Hallett, S., Beckmann, N., Merrell, C., Torgerson, C., Stothard, S., & Siddiqui, N. (2019). *EasyPeasy: Learning through play: Evaluation Report*. Education Endowment Foundation. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/easypeasy-learning-through-play>  
York, B. N., Loeb, S., & Doss, C. (2019). One step at a time: The effects of an early literacy text-messaging program for parents of preschoolers. *Journal of Human Resources*, 54(3), 537–566. <https://jhr.uwpress.org/content/early/2018/01/03/jhr.54.3.0517-8756R>  
Jelley, F., Sylva, K., & Karemaker, A. (2016). *EasyPeasy parenting app: Findings from an efficacy trial on parental engagement and school readiness skills*. The Sutton Trust.  
Jelley, F., & Sylva, K. (2018). *EasyPeasy: Evaluation in Newham: Findings from the Sutton Trust Parental Engagement Fund (PEP) Project*. The Sutton Trust.
- 7 See et al. (2021); cf. Cabell, S. Q., Zucker, T. A., DeCoster, J., Copp, S. B., & Landry, S. (2019). Impact of a Parent Text Messaging Program on Pre-Kindergarteners' Literacy Development. *AERA Open*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419833339>
- 8 See et al. (2021).
- 9 For examples of specific family literacy programs delivered through ECEC services, see:  
Burgoyne, K., Gardner, R., Whiteley, H., Snowling, M. J., & Hulme, C. (2018). Evaluation of a parent-delivered early language enrichment programme: Evidence from a randomised controlled trial. *Journal of (T)JEMETEMIP & s.*

