

Play builds the kind of free-and-easy, do-it-yourself character that our future needs. We must become more self-conscious and more explicit in our praise and reinforcement as children use unstructured play materials:

...You use your own ideas....

...You did it your way....

...You thought it all out yourself.

—James L. Hymes
Child Developmental Specialist

How to get families involved

- Families are a key factor in a preschool setting. The benefits are endless, if you can create an environment in which families feel they are a part of their children's education.
- In creating that bond with parents, you are forming a relationship that encourages parents to provide you with vital information regarding their child—their preferences, dislikes, and abilities.
- Reciprocally—as teachers—you are able to assure parents that their children are well taken care of and loved and guide parents' age-appropriate expectations within your classroom and in the home.
- So, how do you get families involved? Get creative!

Ways families can be involved

Many parents want to come into the classroom and be of hands-on assistance with the children. In this case, here are a few ideas to offer parents:

- Volunteer as a class parent
- Attend parent night/parent teacher conferences
- Spend five minutes in the classroom everyday
- Be a class reader
- Teach the children a new song
- Play a musical instrument with the children
- Share a family tradition
- Bring a special snack to share with the class—allergies considered



What if families don't have time to be involved?

There are some families that are unable to actually come into the classroom to volunteer their time, but they still want to help the class community. Here are a few ideas to encourage these families to take part in their child's education:

- Mend/sew ripped or torn dress-up clothes
- Donate collage materials (buttons, magazines)
- Type labels for learning areas
- Bring in family pictures
- Cut out flannel board story characters

References:

Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). *Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning*. Educational Research, 50(3), 277–289.

Hymes, J. L. (1996). *Teaching the child under six*. West Greenwich, RI: Consortium Publishing.