

# Partnering with each other: the map to collaboration

Partnering simply means working together; each day we partner with children, parents, co-workers, communities, and even ourselves. Is partnering really that important? What does it take to map out positive collaborations?

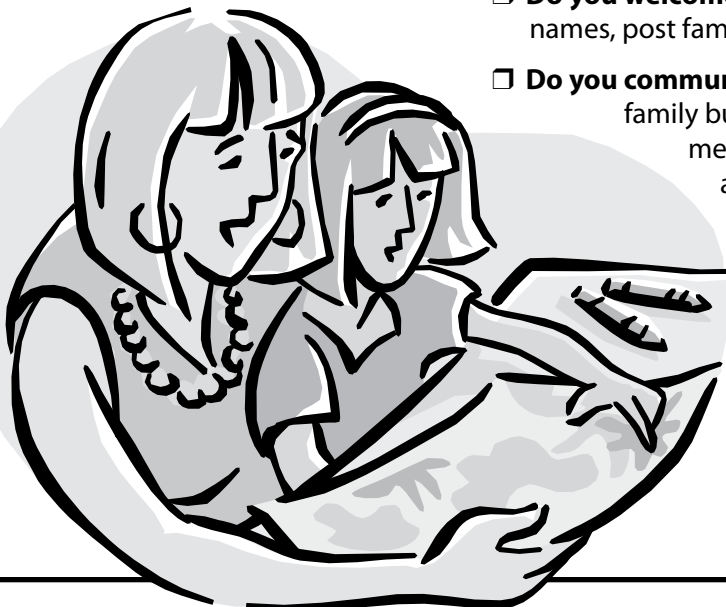
When we take time out of our busy days to look at our actions, our relationships, our achievements, and our challenges, we begin to gather important information to support our work. It is these reflections that help us map out successful collaborations and partnerships. Using the list below as a guide, write down your ideas about the collaborations occurring (or not occurring) in your work as an early educator.

## Partnering with Children

- Do you plan environments that naturally promote partnering?** - Provide space to be comfortable together, materials encouraging more than one person to use (such as blocks), experiences uniting the group (story time, group projects), display children's work, and model to children positive interactions with other adults.
- Do you promote problem-solving?** - Well-thought-out questions bring to the forefront cooperation and partnering: "How will you and Patty make your fort?" "What did you want to tell Peter?"
- Do you plan opportunities to promote self-help and self-reflection?** - Encourage self management, such as children having their own cubby or basket to keep personal items; provide responsibilities, such as cleaning up their snack; encourage guided reflection of their work and play ("What do you like about your painting?" "Where should we display it?")
- Do you listen to children?** - Adjust your ideas and plans in collaboration with the children's; ask for their ideas and help. Observe and document children's work, conversations, and stories.

## Partnering with Families

- Do you welcome families?** - Greet and get to know family members' names, post family photos, offer an open door policy.
- Do you communicate?** - Offer parent handbooks, newsletters, notes, family bulletin board; establish parent mailboxes, plan parent meetings or conferences, and schedule celebrations, such as an open house or art gallery.
- Do you listen?** - Create opportunities for families to be heard, such as meetings, questionnaires, and everyday communications.
- Do you involve families?** - Invite and create times for parents to volunteer.



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## Partnering with Co-workers

- Do you plan together?** - Create opportunities to meet and share ideas, review the philosophy and adjust plans.
- Do you share duties?** - Discuss and divide work duties, create written lists.
- Do you know each other?** - Build relationships by getting to know about each other (family, culture, beliefs, values, and background); take a “team” picture and display in the program.
- Do you value each others’ work?** - Find ways to tell co-workers some thing positive, share concerns in respectful ways, keep communication open.

## Partnering with Community

- Do you know your community?** - Meet neighbors, businesses, and groups of interests by sending a business card, brochure, post card, or artwork from the children, with a note sharing about your program.
- Are community members invited?** - Invite community members to volunteer, offer services, or donate to your program, as well as attend celebrations such as an open house.
- Do you volunteer in the community?** - Try organizing a volunteer opportunity in the community at least once a year, such as a clean-up in a park.

## The Importance of Partnering

Partnering helps all of us understand and know each other better; to build stronger, productive relationships and programs. The path to collaboration and partnering has many roads, but through partnering, we never seem to get lost.

