Family Engagement:
Collaborating with Families of Students with Disabilities

Use this outline to follow along with the module's main features. The blank "Notes" panels below each section are interactive and can be filled in using Adobe Acrobat. Otherwise, print this document and record your notes by hand.

Module Home

- Module Description: This module addresses the importance of engaging the families of students with disabilities in their child's education. It highlights some of the key factors that affect these families and outlines some practical ways to build relationships and create opportunities for involvement (est. completion time: 1 hour).
- STAR Legacy Cycle
- Related to This Module
  - Link: Module Outline
  - Video: Navigating an IRIS STAR Legacy Module
  - Link: IRIS and Adult Learning Theory
  - Wrap-Around Content Map

Challenge

- Video: Friends, my name is Holly Brienza. I'm a teacher at Elmwood Middle School, and I'm here today to address a topic near-and-dear to my educator's heart: Families.

Notes

Initial Thoughts

- What do educators need to understand about families of children with disabilities?
- How can educators engage these families?

Notes

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Perspectives & Resources

❖ Module Objectives

- After completing the entire Perspectives & Resources section and reviewing the accompanying activities, you should:
  - Understand the importance of family engagement
  - Be aware of the actions educators can take to engage families
  - Recognize some of the challenges that families who have children with disabilities may face
  - Identify practical ways to build positive relationships with parents of children with disabilities and to create opportunities for them to be involved
- This IRIS Module aligns with the following licensure and program standards and topic areas…

Notes

❖ Page 1: The Importance of Family Engagement

- Explanation of family engagement
- The relationship between schools and families is… [bullet points]
- Definition of "families"
- Research Shows
- n order to engage families, educators must… [bullet points]
  - Family engagement [graphic]
- For Your Information
  - Link: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) [definition]
  - Link: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) [definition]
  - Link: individualized education program (IEP) team [definition]
- The following pages will discuss… [bullet points]

Notes

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❖ Page 2: Emotional Reactions to Disability

- Families' emotional reactions to disability
  ◦ Family engagement [graphic]
- Range of Emotions
  ◦ Emotion/Example of How Parents Might Display [table]
  ◦ Audio: Luz Hernandez describes the emotions she has felt over the years as the parent of a child with a disability
  ◦ Many families find that their child with a disability has positively impacted their lives by… [bullet points]
  ◦ Audio: Aubri Girardeau describes the joy her child has brought to her family
- Supporting Families
  ◦ Educators can support families by… [bullet points]
  ◦ Activity: Imagine yourself as the parent in one of these three scenarios
    ▪ Link: The Journey: A Parent Comes to Terms with Her Daughter's Disability [pdf]

Notes

❖ Page 3: Additional Roles of Families

- The additional roles of families may… [bullet points]
- Audio: Luz Hernandez discusses the roles she assumed when raising her son who has a disability
- Role/Description [table]
- Audio: Anne Henderson talks about the roles of families who have children with disabilities and how educators can support them
- For Your Information
  ◦ Audio: Aubri Girardeau talks about how her son Caleb has been impacted by having a sibling with a disability
- Supporting Families
  ◦ To support families, educators can… [bullet points]

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❖ Page 4: Stressors of Daily Living

- Common challenges [drop-down menus]
  ◦ Lack of Support
      ▪ Link: respite care [definition]
      ▪ Audio: Luz Hernandez talks about the people she considers her support system
  ◦ Financial Struggles
  ◦ Healthcare Concerns
  ◦ Accessibility Issues
      ▪ Definition of "accessibility"
      ▪ Accessibility Barrier/Description [table]
      ▪ Children with disabilities may accessibility issues related to… [bullet points]
      ▪ For Your Information
          — Link: How to Break Down Communication Barriers Between Teachers and Families [Understood resource]
          — English Language Learners in Special Education: 4 Things to Know About Partnering With Families [Understood resource]

- Supporting Parents
  ◦ Educators can provide support by… [bullet points]
  ◦ For Your Information
      ▪ Link: Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)
      ▪ Link: PACER Center

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❖ Page 5: Build Positive Relationships
- Family engagement [graphic]
- Actions educators can take to build relationships [drop-down menus]
    - Create a Welcoming Environment
        - Teachers can help parents make positive connections by… [bullet points]
        - Audio: Anne Henderson emphasizes the importance of welcoming and involving families in an effort to help all children to learn and succeed
    - Acknowledge Strengths
        - Audio: Aubri Girardeau discusses some of the ways educators have acknowledged the strengths of her child and her family
    - Build Trust
        - Quotation
        - To build respectful and trusting relationships, educators should… [bullet points]
        - For Your Information
            - Working Effectively with Families from Diverse Cultures [PACER Center resource]
            - Road Tested/Three Ways to Engage Parents in High-Poverty Settings [ASCD resource]
            - Audio: Anne Henderson talks about some other factors that help build trust and foster improved relationships between schools and families
    - Recognize Parents as Ultimate Decision-Makers
        - Link: age of majority [definition]
        - Parents who are equal and valued members of the IEP team can… [bullet points]
        - Audio: Aubri Girardeau talks about her experience as a decision-maker and the need for better communication
        - Audio: Anne Henderson talks about parents as decision makers

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❖ **Page 6: Meaningfully Involve Families**

- Family engagement [graphic]
- Common Categories of Parental Involvement/Description and Examples [table]
  - Link: Tips on Communication
  - Audio: Aubri Girardeau describes how she is involved in her child's education and what her school could do to increase involvement among families of children with disabilities

Notes

❖ **Page 7: Involving Families During Distance Learning**

- Link: asynchronous [definition]
- Link: related service providers [definition]
- Link: free appropriate public education (FAPE) [definition]
- During a time of distance learning, family engagement is critical
- Learn more about facilitating engagement during distance learning [drop-down menus]
  - Maintain Open Lines of Communication
    - For Your Information
    - Actions educators can take to facilitate two-way communication with parents [bullet points]
  - Provide Needed Support
    - Families may be facing additional challenges such as… [bullet points]
    - Nonacademic supports
    - Academic supports
    - Did You Know?
      - — Link: Parents: Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic [IRIS Module]
    - Area of Need/Examples of Support [table]
  - Promote Shared Decision-Making Around Changes to the IEP
    - To promote shared decision-making, educators should… [bullet points]
- For Your Information

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- ◦ Link: Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak [U.S. Dept. of Education resource]
- ◦ Link: Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheets [CPIR resource]
- ◦ Link: Reflections About Individualizing Supports for Children and Families: Olivia's Story [TIES Center resource]

Notes

❖ Page 8: References & Additional Resources

- Suggested module citation
- References
- Additional Resources

❖ Page 9: Credits

- Suggested module citation
- Module Developers
- Module Contributors
- Module Production Team
- Media Production Team
- Media
- Expert Interviews
- Acknowledgment

Wrap Up

- Summary of the module
- To actively engage these families, educators can take the following actions [bullet points]
- Family engagement [graphic]
- Audio: Luz Hernandez shares some words of wisdom for professionals who work with families who have a child with a disability
- Revisit your Initial Thoughts responses

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Assessment

- Complete the numbered questions. Please note that the IRIS Center does not collect your Assessment responses. If this is a course assignment, you should turn them in to your professor using whatever method he or she requires.

Notes

You Have Completed This Module

- Give Us Your Feedback
  - ◦ Link: Module feedback survey form
- Professional Development Hours
  - ◦ Link: IRIS PD Options
- Related Resources [links]