Using Pre-K Family Engagement Resources on

CLI engage

This document is a high-level overview of how CLI Engage Family Engagement Resources can be folded into a district-level family engagement plan. The strategies presented here are not meant to be all inclusive, but rather represent research-driven ways to engage families in supporting children's development using resources that are freely available to school districts and families.

How the document is organized:

General Strategy

This is a broad strategy we encourage you to consider in order to strengthen your family engagement program. CLI has developed professional learning sessions (online courses) to help teachers explore these topics, in addition to a session that provides general guidance for partnering with families.

CLI ENGAGE TOOLS

Within each general strategy, there are specific CLI Engage tools to help you implement that strategy.

INTENSITY LEVEL

We realize organizations are not identical in their preparedness to implement intensive family engagement or may not have extensive resources to pursue it. This document provides guidance for using CLI's family engagement tools with varying levels of intensity:

- *Low intensity strategies* are ways to use the tools that are low cost and require minimal staffing support. These are foundational practices that can be built upon as you get farther along in implementation.

- Some school districts may already be using low intensity or similar strategies and are ready to enrich their implementation. *Moderate intensity strategies* require a bit more time commitment from teachers and families.

- *High intensity strategies* involve intensive, ongoing engagement with families through multiple touchpoints and usually require more intensive professional development for teachers.

Consider what your school or district is currently doing in these topics, how strong your district is in implementating the strategies, and what resources you have available. You might have strong implementation in one topic and are just getting started in another.

Encouraging Play-Based Learning and Responsive Interactions at Home

There is a substantial research base that concludes play-based learning, in combination with responsive interactions, is the best way to build academic and executive functioning skills in young children. But many programs have yet to embrace play-based learning as a family engagement approach, opting instead for more traditional homework exercises like worksheets. Traditional homework is often developmentally inappropriate for preschoolers, frustrating for parents, and unappealing to children. Alternatively, there are districts who choose to institute no homework policies, which may set up a barrier to connecting families with play-based learning opportunities. CLI recommends shifting to effective home-based learning that is grounded in play and responsive interactions. In addition to more effectively building academic skills, this approach has the added benefit of building the social and emotional bonds between young children and their parents, siblings, and other family members. Teachers can encourage this learning at home by coaching parents in "how to play" and how to recognize and be responsive to their children's signals.

CLI ENGAGE TOOLS

The **CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family** provides opportunities for teachers to share play-based activities with parents and caregivers that will help to enhance and extend learning outside the classroom. Family activities support important school readiness skills and utilize common materials. Many activities have an accompanying video featuring real families demonstrating what to do.

Access at: cliengagefamily.org

LOW INTENSITY	MODERATE INTENSITY	HIGH INTENSITY
• Send home the family activity Parent Introduction Letter and a few activities that align with curriculum themes • Use the "Alignment of Family Activites to the Prekindergarten Guidelines" document to select some home activities that align with your PKG instructional goals • Have staff independently review the online course, "Encouraging Play-based Learning and Responsive Interactions at Home"	• Individualize activity selections based on student assessment results (selecting activities that target skills of concern). For example, use the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring Grouping Tool to select activities for each small group • Discuss with families strategies to incorporate play-based learning at home and introduce parents to the CAC Family (e.g., at a parent-teacher conference) • Organize a staff workshop or professional learning community (PLC) around the online course, "Encouraging Play-based Learning and Responsive Interactions at Home"	• Fully align play-based home activities with curriculum themes and incorporate the activities as homework into your lesson plans across the full year • Adjust lesson plans to periodically differentiate home activities based on individual students' assessment results and portfolios • Arrange times to model for and coach families on specific activities • Create take-home kits that include all the materials needed for families to engage in specific activities • Partner with CLI to receive training services for encouraging play-based learning (fee-based)

ALIGNMENT TO TEA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENTS
- Component 4: Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning
- Component 5: Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks

Promoting Two-Way Conversations about Skill Development to Individualize Student Support

Parents and guardians should be regularly informed of how their children are progressing in prekindergarten and provided concrete ways they can support their children in key learning areas. A natural opportunity to have these conversations is parent-teacher conferences. CLI recommends using conferences not only as a touchpoint for discussing concerns about a particular skill, but also as an opportunity to educate families on what skills they should expect their children to exhibit and why they are important for future learning. Tools like family observation forms also hold potential for collecting valuable parent insight and perspective that can positively impact a teacher's approach with a child. Building this partnership during parent-teacher conferences provides a foundation for followup communications through phone or email.

CLI ENGAGE TOOLS

The **CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System Parent Reports** give families information about the skills in which their child needs more targeted support and practice to be on track for kindergarten. The reports link directly to family activities that support key skills at home.

The **Family Observation Forms** align to C-PM observable measures and ask families to begin thinking about their child's development more critically in order to lay a foundation for future conversations about their child's progress.

LOW INTENSITY	MODERATE INTENSITY	HIGH INTENSITY
• Print and send home Family Feedback forms to get families thinking about their children's development • Print or email CIRCLE Progress Monitoring Parent Reports to provide to families at each assessment wave • Have staff independently review the online course, "Conversations about Students' Development"	• Use C-PM parent reports and Family Observation Forms to guide parent-teacher conferences, discussing student strengths and areas in need of additional support and practice. • Discuss with families the recommended CIRCLE activities linked from the C-PM parent report • Organize a group workshop or professional learning community (PLC) around the online course, "Conversations about Students' Development"	• Using C-PM reports and family feedback forms to guide the conversation, work with families to set concrete goals for both classroom and home-based learning activities that meet the needs of individual students (Tip: Use the "Family & Teacher Goal-Setting Form" template) • Partner with CLI to receive training services for using C-PM parent reports and family feedback forms (fee-based)

ALIGNMENT TO TEA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENTS

- Component 3: Increase family participation in decision-making
- Component 4: Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning
- Component 5: Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks

Hosting Family Events to Support Children's Development

Hosting planned, playful, and purposeful classroom family night events are an excellent way to prepare parents to be successful home educators and engage as partners in their child's educational support team. CLI recommends using these events to give families the opportunity to learn about an aspect of child skill development, see it modeled by their child's teacher, and engage in playful activities with their child to practice that skill. These sessions serve as practice for the family member as well, who can be coached to be attuned to and responsive to their children's interest and engagement. This structure prepares parents to be able to replicate these types of learning activities at home, especially if teachers connect families to related home activities.

CLI ENGAGE TOOLS

CLI, in partnership with the Children's Museum of Houston, has created six themed family events (known as *Teaching Together*) to encourage literacy development with young learners and support the emotional bond between parents and children. During a facilitated 60-minute workshop, children and families engage in an interactive learning experiences together through a shared book reading, followed by visits to hands-on activity stations. Families are also given practical ideas of how to apply the learned strategies at home. Learning topics include Building Trust and Cooperation, Talking is Teaching, Making Books Come Alive, Playing with Letters and Sounds, Building Your Child's Vocabulary, and Writing Together. Facilitator manuals are available.

LOW INTENSITY	MODERATE INTENSITY	HIGH INTENSITY
• Have staff independently review the online course, "Hosting Family Nights" • Choose one *Teaching Together* workshop and incorporate activities and materials into an open house / family night event • Pick one activity from the *CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family* and incorporate these into your family night event	• Organize a group workshop or professional learning community (PLC) around the online course, "Hosting Family Nights" • Choose family night topics based on classroom assessment data (e.g., majority of children need support in vocabulary development) • Commit to two to three *Teaching Together* workshops and follow the curriculum • Create your own family night using activities from the *CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family*	• Commit to hosting the full *Teaching Together* workshop series with families • Partner with CLI to facilitate or co-facilitate *Teaching Together* workshops at your campus (fee-based) • Partner with CLI to receive training to deliver *Teaching Together* workshops (fee-based) • Recruit and train parents to deliver workshops using CIRCLE Activities

ALIGNMENT TO TEA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENTS

- Component 1: Facilitate family-to-family support
- Component 4: Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning
- Component 5: Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks

What does this look like for my district?

Below are a few sample scenarios describing how these tools can be combined in low, moderate, and high intensity implementation. There are myriad ways the tools can be utilized, however, and districts are encouraged to tailor implementation to fit their needs.

LOW INTENSITY: This school district is just beginning to implement family engagement strategies. They have used CIRCLE Progress Monitoring for a few years, so they start by having teachers review the one-hour online professional learning session, "Having Conversations about Students' Development." They have teachers send home the C-PM parents reports after the students are assessed and attach a set of Family Observation Forms, with instructions to return the forms to the teacher. They look over the forms and contact the family if they have any questions or if any of the families' observations are concerning. Finally, they use their regularly scheduled open house night to deliver activities from a *Teaching Together* workshop and send home flyers to announce the event.

MODERATE INTENSITY: This school district has been sending home play-based activities and C-PM parent reports and is ready to take it a step further. They start the year with having teachers independently review all four family engagement professional learning sessions and schedule a group workshop to talk about how they will implement key strategies from the sessions. They schedule their parent-teacher conferences to coincide with the end of their beginning-of-year assessment window and send home Family Observations Forms two weeks before the conferences. The teachers prepare for the conferences by reviewing each child's assessment results and identifying home-based activities that provide the skill practice each child needs. At the conferences, they carefully walk parents through their children's individualized C-PM reports, giving family friendly examples of the skills they assessed and explaining why they matter for future skill development. They spend some time talking about the parents' responses to the Family Observation Forms, recording notes about the parents' concerns and celebrating successes. The teachers then talk about how their children can practice specific skills with play-based activities at home, and walk through the instructions for each CIRCLE activity they've selected for the child. Finally, they hand each parent a flyer for a three-night series of *Teaching Together* family events and encourage them to come for more ideas about how to support their children's development.

HIGH INTENSITY: This school district is prioritizing family engagement and putting significant time and resources into preparing their teachers to be effective family partners. They organize facilitated professional development sessions to explore the content of professional learning sessions in depth, as well as include CLI's family engagement strategies into their teacher coaching program. They use parent-teacher conferences to accomplish the same strategies as the moderate intensity school district, but take it a step further by using the time to brainstorm with families how they can work together to support the child and formally document specific goals and action plans (how they will reach the goals). In addition to providing individualized play-based activities, they have fully aligned CIRCLE activities with their class curriculum and talk with parents about how these activities are better supports for skill development and that they can expect to see them throughout the year. They also discuss ways parents can be responsive to their children's signals during the activities and establish a convenient two-way communication method for parents to get advice from the teacher or provide feedback on how the activities went. Finally, this district partners with CLI to organize a *Teaching Together* training for their specialists and a teacher from each campus so that they are prepared to support their campus in delivering the full workshop series across the year.