

**Best Practices in Family and Community Engagement Video Series: Program Environments:
Responsive Programming for Migrant Families**

[Music]

Narrator: Successful family engagement means strong partnerships built on respect, shared goals, and commitment to better outcomes for the children.

Teacher: You can write your name in there, if you want it. That's okay.

Narrator: By building on families' strengths and listening to their needs. Programs can create an environment that supports family well-being and helps them thrive. The resulting sense of belonging, ownership, and community are all critical to a family's success. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs run by the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo have created just this kind of environment. Most of their families farm the strawberry fields of California's central coast.

Julissa Solorio: They work long hours. They start at 5:30, 6 in the morning and the children are picked up at 5, 6, 6:30 in the evening, sometimes 7.

Narrator: The toll on the families is real.

Julissa: They get home; they're tired; they're exhausted; they need to get ready for the next day. And they still don't have that time for their kids and I think that becomes stressful.

Narrator: The program engages the parents from the start.

Enriqueta Fuentes: We always let our community know that we are open. And then families start calling or coming in. And we start building that relationship with them from there: Taking their information, talking to them, listening to their stories. Finding out where they came from, what's been going on with them.

Narrator: Building relationships with the children and parents is a priority.

Maria Reyes: When we enroll the children, there is a home visit done, before the children actually starts in our program. So, they go to their homes; they meet the children, and they ask the parents questions - that's helping us to know your child. So, that helps a lot to the children, because they see the teachers going to their houses, talking to their parents, interacting with them. And then, when they come to the center that first day that they're here they saw that familiar face already that was at their home.

[Teacher and children singing] Now, I know my ABC's next time, won't you sing with me.

Narrator: Whether center-based or family child care, the environment is welcoming and relationships are valued.

Maria: We have all the parents come in, before we actually start the program. We go over expectations from parents. We try to involve them and let them see how important it is for them to be part of their children's education. They are their first teachers in their child's life and we need to have that connection; we need to work together to get the best of their children.

Narrator: An important part of the program is its support of family child care. Family child care gives these migrant parents added flexibility, with their special work situations. It also creates a stable, home-like environment for children who are often on the move. The close relationships they form with providers help them learn better; helping parents learn, too, is a constant goal.

Sonia Garnica: Our agency adopted the Abriendo Puertas, the Opening Doors curriculum. It's a program that was designed in partnership with the the Latino parents, in the community, where it was developed. And so, its themes that it's really important to the families. We look at child development, starting with brain development, the physical, language development. And the importance of them advocating for their children, not just now when they're little, but to continue to do so, as they're going through elementary school and then high school.

Narrator: One sign it's working: Though these parents work long hours in the fields, many spend what free time they have with their children.

Maria: I think it is that confidence that they have in the teachers and with the program. We bond with them; we invite them; we feel them welcome to come anytime.

Narrator: The families are truly appreciative.

Manuel, parent: [In Spanish] To know that she is doing well and that she continues to learn all the things that she is learning.

Matilde, parent: [In Spanish] He is getting a better education, because the teachers do help him and help us, as well to better educate him. Through the program we learn more about education so that our children will do better.

Narrator: The program partners with parents to support the hopes, dreams and goals they have for their children.

Enriqueta: The desire of all parents is their children be successful and that they become educated, so that they don't have to work in the fields, as they have and struggle as they have to make ends meet.

Prisiliano, parent [In Spanish]: My dream is to see my child grow and see them one day have a career, like a lawyer.

Narrator: It's a true partnership, between parents and providers.

Julissa: They know their children are safe. They know their children are learning.

Narrator: And it's all a result of a focus on the families.

Julissa: The very, very most important thing is to be respectful. You have to respect them in every way possible. You have to understand where they're coming from. Whether their culture, their living situation, their home where we do the home visits. All of those things. To them, it's their life; it's their home. And you have to respect that.

Berta, parent [In Spanish]: What we see at home is that he is advancing, and we also help him at home. He is advancing a lot and he is prepared to go to kindergarten.

[Music] [Questions for discussion]