

HMH Family Engagement

Fostering Community. Creating Opportunity.

A RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Need for Effective Programs for English Learners and Their Families	5
<i>HMH Family Engagement</i> © 2017 Program Overview	14
Strand 1: Effective Strategies for Family Engagement.....	18
Strand 2: Effective Strategies for Reaching English Learners and Their Families	29
Strand 3: Effective Strategies for Professional Development and Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners	40
Conclusion	51
References	52

Introduction

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 is a new kind of a program, developed to build a system of support around English learners to help them learn and achieve at higher levels. **HMH Family Engagement** brings families and educators together to improve the academic achievement of English learners, preschool through high school. This curriculum gives districts the training, strategies, and tools to develop, implement, and sustain an effective action plan to reach families of English learners and build collaborative partnerships.

HMH Family Engagement connects scholars, educators, and families through a program that research suggests will be effective with English learners. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate clearly and explicitly the scientific research base for **HMH Family Engagement**. The program is built on the idea that when we build a system of support around an English learner, that student will be able to learn and achieve more. As such, the program is built on what we know about meeting the instructional needs of English learners, as well as on what research suggests about effectively reaching families and providing professional learning.

This report is organized around three areas of research:

- ◆ Effective Strategies for Family Engagement
- ◆ Effective Strategies for Reaching English Learners and Their Families
- ◆ Effective Strategies for Professional Development and Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners

To help readers of this document make the connections between the research and **HMH Family Engagement**, each strand includes the following sections:

- ◆ **Defining the Strand.** This section summarizes the terminology and provides an overview of the research related to the strand.
- ◆ **Research That Guided the Development of HMH Family Engagement.** This section provides excerpts from and summaries of relevant research on each strand.
- ◆ **From Research to Practice.** This section explains how the research data are exemplified in **HMH Family Engagement**.

The combination of the major research recommendations and the related features of **HMH Family Engagement** will help readers better understand how the program incorporates research into its instructional design.

A reference list of works cited is provided at the end of this document.

A note on language:

To describe those students for whom English is not their first language and who lack the English proficiency to study successfully at grade level, educators and policy makers use different terms. These students may be called English learners (ELs), limited-English proficient (LEP), English-language learners (ELLs), language minority students, or be referred to with a label, English-as-a-second language (ESL) students or English Language Development (ELD) students or English Language Acquisition (ELA) students. In addition, researchers may use the shorthand L1 or L2 to describe students' native language (L1) and their learned language (L2). ELL and LEP are the terms most often by the federal and state governments (Ross, 2015). For the purposes of this report, students in this group are most often referred to as English learners (ELs), and their families are referred to as EL families.

In this report, the words *family* or *families* are often used in place of *parent* or *parents* to recognize the important role that all family members contribute to a student's education and development. Both words, *families* and *parents*, are used to refer to the adults responsible for a scholar.

In addition, ***HMH Family Engagement*** is premised upon the belief that every student is a *Scholar*, and so readers will see this word used in place of *student* in key program descriptions in this report.

The Need for Effective Programs for English Learners and Their Families

The Diversity of American Schools

American schools reflect the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of the United States' population. In the last decade, this diversity has continued to increase: "from fall 2002 through fall 2012, the number of White students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 28.6 million to 25.4 million, and their share of public school enrollment decreased from 59 to 51 percent" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015c). Meanwhile, percentages rose for Hispanic students, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and students identified as having two or more races. In 2014, Americans younger than 5 years old became the first group to be majority-minority, with just over half identified as a member of a racial or ethnic group (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Continued waves of immigration contribute to this diversity. As families enter the United States, their children enroll in schools. And, thus, "Immigration's impact is often first seen in the classroom" (Gebeloff, Evans, & Scheinkman, 2006).

The Increasing Percentages of English Learners

As the numbers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds continue to rise nationally, the number of English learners (ELs) in schools increases. The percentage of ELs in American public schools was higher in 2012–2013, at 9.2 percent (or 4.4 million students) than in 2002–2003 (8.7 percent) and 2011–2012 (9.1 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). Projections suggest that in the United States by the year 2025, one in four students will be an English learner (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008). While public schools in every state educate ELs (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010), a number of states have notably higher percentages of ELs. In the District of Columbia and Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas, ELs make up greater than 10 percent of the student population. Some American cities and districts serve even greater percentages. In a survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, close to a third of Council districts indicated EL enrollment from 20 to 60 percent (Council of the Great City Schools, 2013).

ELs are diverse. ELs are classified as such because they have first learned a language other than English and lack sufficient English language proficiency to engage in grade-level learning. While they share this in common, "...they enter U.S. schools with a wide range of language proficiencies... and of subject-matter knowledge. They differ in educational background, expectations of schooling, socioeconomic status, age of arrival in the United States, and personal experiences coming to and living in the United States" (Christian, 2006, p. 2). They may be U.S. or foreign-born. Their native languages vary, with the vast majority speaking Spanish, but significant numbers speaking Chinese languages, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, Russian, Tagalog, and other languages (Zong & Batalova, 2015). And, importantly, their levels of literacy in their native languages may vary considerably, as do their early experiences with literacy at home.

Troubling Performance Gaps between ELs and Non-ELs

Meaningful gaps in achievement and educational outcomes exist between ELs and those who are English proficient, and these gaps have been persistent. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show gaps in the reading score performance of ELs and non-ELs in Grades 4 and 8 (Council of the Great City Schools, 2013). NAEP results also give a broad comparison of the performance of Hispanic ELs and non-ELs nationwide. When NAEP results are broken out by *Non-ELL Hispanic* students (English proficient) and *ELL Hispanic* (EL), point gaps in reading average in the 30s (Hemphill, Vanneman, & Rahman, 2011). Despite efforts to meet the needs of ELs, these gaps remain: “the achievement gap between non-ELL and ELL students in 2013 was not measurably different from the gap in either 2009 or 1998” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015d).

In mathematics, similar gaps exist. In 2013 and in all previous NAEP administrations since 1996, non-EL students outperformed EL students in mathematics in Grades 4 and 8 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). Gaps also exist for Algebra 1 completion. About 50% of non-ELs complete Algebra 1, while only about 12% of English learners and about 33% of former ELs complete the course (Council of the Great City Schools, 2013).

While U.S. students are graduating from high school at a higher rate than ever before (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), with a recent 4 % increase among Hispanic students, these promising statistics are shadowed by troubling numbers. Graduation rates for ELs are much lower than for the general population (59% compared with 80%) (Ross, 2015). ELs are twice as likely as those with English proficiency to drop out (Callahan, 2013). High dropout rates have serious political, social, and economic implications (Callahan, 2013; Belfield & Levin, 2007).

The Added Challenges of High Standards and New Accountability Measures

The convergence of demographic trends (increasing diversity, increasing percentages of ELs in schools, wide diversity among ELs) and performance patterns (stubbornly persistent gaps) is particularly significant in light of recent educational policy developments. States nationwide have adopted new, rigorous, college- and career-ready standards for students. High-stakes assessments to ensure accountability to these standards are administered annually to students. Title I and Title III guidelines explicitly include ELs in these systems. In his overview of research in the field of educating language minority students, Hakuta (2011) concludes with a discussion of key future issues impacting ELs. He cites the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) implementation as a shift with important implications for ELs, particularly in their needs (1) for increased support in gaining academic language and (2) in how they will be assessed. Targeted support for ELs is needed because ELs “face the dual challenges of mastering English and acquiring the academic skills and knowledge deemed essential for a sound education and a productive future” (Christian, 2006, p. 3).

The Importance of the Family for Student Success

That “families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7) is not surprising. Students spend about three-quarters of their time at home during their formative years, and just one-quarter at school (Reynolds & Clements, 2005). Research and experience point to the importance of families in setting high expectations, establishing positive conditions for learning, and promoting positive educational outcomes for students. A meta-analysis of research on family involvement concluded that “what the family does is more important to student success than family income or education” (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p. 6). Taningco and Pachon (2008), too, point to the importance of the family in terms of expectations. In exploring the connection between reading and writing ability, math and science achievement, and computer use, along with other criteria related to families and family involvement, their data suggested that high “parental expectations have consistently positive effects on scores” (p. 1). In their report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, August and Shanahan (2006) find that the research demonstrates that “more home literacy experiences and opportunities are associated with superior literacy outcomes” (p. 7).

The impacts of family involvement begin at the earliest grade levels. In an examination of students who were not promoted to Grade 1 after participation in a Kindergarten Head Start program, Mantzicopoulos (2003) found that parental school involvement was a key predictor of nonpromotion. At the other end of the grade span, McNeal (1999) found a connection between low parent involvement and negative behavioral outcomes, such as truancy and dropping out of school.

Families appear to contribute to children’s learning and performance in myriad ways. Families set the stage for learning in concrete ways. They ensure that students come to school, provide reading materials at home, and limit the use of television and other media—all of which contribute to higher achievement (Barton & Coley, 1992). The Child Trends Data Bank “examines and monitors more than 100 indicators that focus on risks and positive developments for children” and then analyze the data and connect these indicators to inform initiatives focused on improving the well-being of the nations’ children. A recent analysis of school attendance and student performance led to the conclusion that an important role for parents is to get their children to school. This step is basic but essential, because higher attendance correlates with higher achievement, for all students and particularly those with lower socio-economic status (Child Trends Data Bank, 2014). A meta-analysis of over 100 studies looked at the connection between children’s access to print materials and their education-related outcomes (Lindsay, 2010). The findings—a significant, positive relationship between reading access and educational outcomes—suggest that families play an important role by reading to students and providing them with access to texts. Families also guide students in less tangible ways, by setting high expectations and communicating a belief in the child’s ability to succeed.

Higher-performing schools tend to have higher levels of parent involvement (Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000; Charles A. Dana Center, 1999). And educators recognize the importance of family involvement. In a large-scale survey of U.S. teachers, researchers found that “Educators across all subgroups identify family involvement as the most critical factor of student success, followed closely by high expectations for all students” (Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012, p. 9).

The Benefits of Engaging Families

Involved families support students' learning and achievement. But what of parents who are not actively engaged or do not know how to become involved? Research suggests that programs and targeted efforts to engage families make a difference (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In a qualitative study, Johnstone and Hiatt (1997) found that schools' outreach practices led to increased involvement. When schools actively engage and involve families, students' educational outcomes improve. Crosnoe (2013) explored the research to identify which factors have the biggest impacts on readiness and achievement for children of immigrant families. His review led him to conclude that family-school partnerships are a key element in supporting the achievement of these students. In looking at the factors of successful Chicago schools, researchers found that not only were parent, school, and community ties a key element for success, they were also a successful support in transforming low-performing schools (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppesco, & Easton, 2009). The Chicago Longitudinal Study, conducted to examine the progress of over 1,500 low-income students in Chicago who were participants in the city's Child-Parent Center Program, showed how parental involvement contributes to children's success in school, across various measures, including educational performance (in reading and mathematics), special education placement, grade retention, attendance, and high school completion (see Barnard, 2004; Clements, Reynolds, & Hickey, 2004; Reynolds, 2000; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001).

Efforts to engage families, and particularly families of ELs, appear to benefit students and schools because these efforts:

Respect the Culture of Students and Families: Involving families respects cultural traditions of many EL families who value family involvement. And, at the same time, these efforts build educators' cultural awareness. Stevenson (1993) analyzed international comparisons showing the high academic success of Asian students and suggested that the family's high priority on education may play an important role in these results. Chrispeels and González (2004) found that a culturally sensitive education program increased Latino parents' participation and learning. Marschall (2006) engaged in a study of parent-school involvement in urban, Chicago schools and found that parental involvement, specifically in school governance and more formal school connections, led to greater cultural competency among educators—which built a more trusting, respectful relationship between educators and families and translated into an increase in both reading and math scores for students. The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) and the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) (2010) reviewed research on ELs to prepare a report and policy recommendations for closing the achievement gaps among Hispanic students, particularly in English language proficiency and in the middle-school grades. A key conclusion was that ELs benefit from strong, culturally sensitive relationships with their teachers and other adults in the school. These relationships can be fostered when educators engage in professional learning to build cultural understanding, respect the value of students' primary language, and build knowledge among ELs and EL families about the U.S. educational system and opportunities.

Raise Teacher Expectations: Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez (2008) conducted a study looking at Latino youth and found that increased parent involvement in the school correlated with

higher teacher expectations for the students' academic attainment. This connection is meaningful because research suggests that higher expectations link to more positive outcomes for students. In one study, students from low, regular, and advanced courses were all placed into a high-level course. Students learned more and achieved at higher levels, supporting the idea that when teachers hold high expectations for students, they can rise to meet them (Barth, 2003).

Increase Student Achievement: Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman (2013) analyzed results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and found that “across the 21 countries included in our study, in general, increased social and cultural communication with parents is associated with higher levels of student literacy” (p. 258). In a study that looked at changes in student performance in a sample of 71 Title I schools, key findings included that students made faster and greater gains in reading and mathematics when their teachers were especially active in reaching out to low-achievers' parents (Westat & Policy Studies Associates, 2001). In a meta-analysis of 41 studies, Jeynes (2005), too, found a correlation between programs that encourage parent support and increased student achievement. In terms of closing the achievement gap, in a meta-analysis of research on the factors that best reduce the achievement gap, Jeynes (2015) looked at 30 studies and concluded that, while the achievement gap remains disappointingly persistent, encouraging data are found in efforts that go beyond the classroom and incorporate cultural and family factors. A review of research suggests that family engagement is “beneficial across all levels of academic achievement for all minority groups, and particularly for Latino populations” (Park & McHugh, 2014, p. 2).

Reduce Absenteeism: Studies by Epstein and Sheldon (2002) and Sheldon (2007) look at the impact of family-school partnerships on student absenteeism and find that efforts to engage families result in increased student attendance.

Improve Student Attitudes toward School: Dearing, Kreider, and Weiss (2008) conducted a longitudinal study from Kindergarten through Grade 5 for an ethnically diverse, low-income group of students, and found that increases in family involvement predicted improvements in student-teacher relationships, which resulted in students' more positive attitudes towards school.

Motivate Students to Stay in School: Mounting research suggests that engaging and partnering with parents is a central element of keeping students in school through Grade 12 (Furger, 2008). In interviews with students who had dropped out of high school, 71% believed that they might have stayed in school if there had been better communication between parents and the school and if their parents had been more involved in their education (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006).

Positively Affect Children's Social-Emotional Development: Caspe and Lopez (2006), from the Harvard Family Research Project, looked at studies of family-strengthening intervention programs, and found that such programs have positive effects on children's social-emotional development, reducing problem behaviors and improving social competence.

Save Money: Houtenville and Conway (2008) look at the research from another angle—a cost-benefit analysis. They estimate that the benefits of parental involvement efforts are substantial, and equal to the results that would be gained by schools with an increase in per-pupil spending of about \$1,000.

In their cost-benefit analysis, Reynolds, Template, Robertson, and Mann (2002) determined that for every dollar invested for family supports in the preschool years, about two dollars are returned to society at large, given the positive long-term outcomes and reduced remediation and justice system treatments

Federal and State Mandates and Standards for Family Engagement

Because of the demonstrated benefits of family engagement, increasingly districts, states, national organizations, and federal policy makers have made family engagement a priority.

- ◆ At the school level, educators are increasingly “adopting systemic and sustained efforts to integrate parents into the fabric of their schools” (Scoon Reid, 2015, p. 9).
- ◆ At the national level, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has established standards for effective family engagement, the *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships*. These standards include the expectations that schools will welcome families, communicate effectively, collaboratively support student success, encourage families to advocate for children, practice shared leadership, and collaborate with the community.
- ◆ At the federal level, Title I funding requires that each state has a plan for effective parental involvement strategies. Title III guidelines also state that family engagement initiatives must develop schools’ and families’ capacity to support student achievement and school improvement efforts. The *Family Engagement Act of 2013* seeks to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of local and state family engagement programs (Park & McHugh, 2014).

Weiss, Lopez, and Rosenberg (2010) present a research-based frame for federal-level family engagement systems and policies (developed as a companion piece to the 2010 National Policy Forum on Family, School, and Community Engagement). In it, they argue that family engagement “should be an essential strategy in building a pathway to college- and career-readiness in today’s competitive global society” (p. 1).

Effective Approaches for Engaging Families

Because the benefits are clear and engagement is mandated, schools must consider how best to engage families. In their report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, August and Shanahan (2006) advise that the research supports the finding that schools should see parents' "interest, motivation, and potential contributions" (p. 7) as an opportunity to help children succeed academically. Goldenberg and Coleman (2010) reiterate this finding in their overview of EL research, *Promoting Academic Achievement among English Learners: A Guide to the Research*. Here, Goldenberg and Coleman point to research studies on school-home connections that have contributed to positive student outcomes and conclude that "parents are valuable potential allies who could help their ELL children improve school achievement" (p. 131). But, building effective partnerships is complex. An effective program must attend to varied stakeholders within and outside of the school—administrators (district and school leaders), educators (classroom teachers and EL Specialists), and families (of varying sizes and compositions)—as well as the English learners themselves. What are some of the ways that schools can better foster such partnerships?

Information Sharing: Engagement can be as basic as information sharing. Families who are consistently informed about progress have higher-achieving students (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Providing parents with actionable messages is also highly effective (Kraft & Rogers, 2014).

Building Content Knowledge: Starkey and Klein (2000) found that when low-income Latino and African-American parents were trained to support their children's mathematical learning, their children demonstrated greater gains in mathematical learning than students in a comparison group. In a qualitative study of a literacy training program for Mexican immigrant parents, Rodriguez-Brown, Li, and Albom (1999) found that, when parents were trained specifically on home-based literacy activities (read alouds, conversations about books, modeling, and so on), parents' involvement increased at home and at school.

Sharing Home-Based Strategies: Sharing ideas for how families can create supportive structures in the home environment has also been shown effective (Fan & Chen, 2001; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Barton & Coley, 2007).

Providing Information on the U.S. School System: Wood, Shankland, Jordan, and Pollard (2014) consider four decades of research by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, and others, and provide insights into how districts can create systems for sustained family engagement. A key conclusion is that effective family engagement programs teach parents how to navigate and be involved within the schools to advocate for and support their children (Wood, Shankland, Jordan, & Pollard, 2014, p. 3).

Recently, with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), the U.S. Department of Education released a framework for family-school partnerships.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships



(From Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 8)

The Need for Effective Programs for Family Engagement

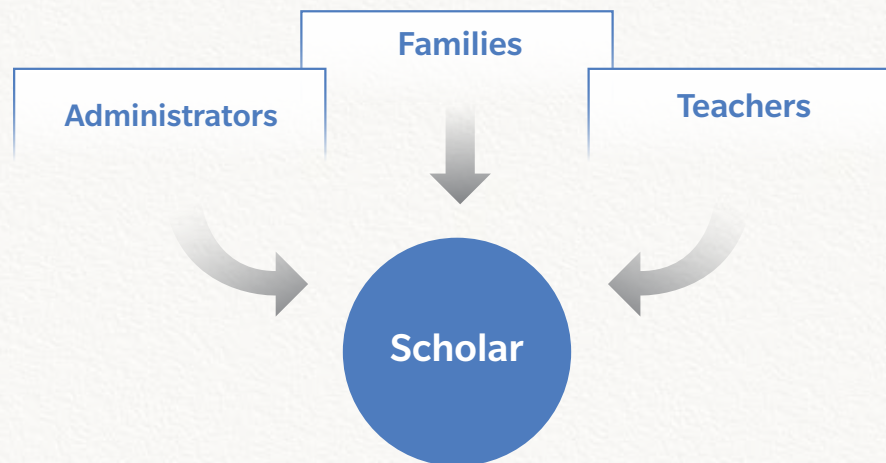
The path to increased family engagement is not easy. But family engagement holds great promise in creating opportunities for ELs. Educators should remember that parents and families share the goal of student academic success. Immigrant families tend to be very highly committed to their children's educational opportunities (Crosby & Dunbar, 2012).

Clearly, effective family engagement programs are needed. Schools' capacities to effectively serve English learners have been challenged as EL populations increase and performance gaps persist. If they are to succeed in educating all students and supporting the development of skills for college- and career-readiness, schools must better meet the needs of ELs. Family engagement can play an important role. Partnerships between schools, families, and scholars can help to ensure all students are college- and career-ready. Effective programs are needed, so that schools and families have the tools and resources they need to create partnerships that will help all students succeed.

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 is just such a program.

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 Program Overview

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 connects families, educators, and students in support of increased student learning and achievement. Supporting scholars' academic success is at the heart of the program.



The program's resources and tools help develop and sustain an effective, collaborative partnership among schools, the community, ELs, and EL families. The program's ultimate goal is to foster the academic success of EL students, the fastest growing demographic segment of Grades Pre-K through 12.

To support strong family-school partnerships, *HMH Family Engagement* has multiple, specific objectives:

- ◆ **To accentuate the belief that every English learner is a *Scholar***, and to encourage families and educators to set high expectations for each *Scholar* by tapping into the strengths and potential that each brings to the classroom.
- ◆ **To provide professional learning**, strategies, and tools for educators to develop and sustain an effective, collaborative school-community-family partnership to improve the academic success of English learners.
- ◆ **To respect and honor English learners and their families** and deepen understanding of their cultural backgrounds and beliefs in order to build positive relationships among English learners, their families, educators, school and district officials, and the community.
- ◆ **To enable the families of English learners to support and advocate for their scholars**, by providing clear and useful information, strategies, and activities that will help them "decode" the U.S. educational system.

HMH Family Engagement Program



School Districts

- District Leaders
- School Leaders
- Teachers
- EL Specialists

Families

- Parents/Caregivers
- Their children (*Scholars*)

School District Program Components

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Face-to-Face
- Webinar
- Online

PRINT/DIGITAL MATERIALS

- Program Implementation Guides
- ▲ *Communications Toolkit*
- Administrator Guides
- Educator Guides
- Video
- Audio

Learn Together Workshops

5 per school year



Welcome to School



Academic Achievement



Support at Home



Assessment Success



Technology

Family Program Components

PRINT/DIGITAL MATERIALS

- *Family Guide* Accessible English
- *Family Guide* Spanish
- Video
- Audio
- *HMH School Talk* Academic Language Game App

To help schools and districts overcome possible barriers to effective partnerships and to facilitate these collaborative partnerships, **HMH Family Engagement** offers targeted tools and resources and a core of five *Learn Together Workshops* for each grade span.

HMH Family Engagement Supports Communication by...

- ◆ Addressing the unique challenges of communicating with and supporting families with limited English proficiency through carefully designed **Learn Together Workshops** offering opportunities for collaboration, accessible **English and Spanish Family Guides**, **audio and video support**, and **a Communications Toolkit** that includes resources designed to reach English learners through popular media distribution channels in their communities.
- ◆ Enabling easy **online access** to family and educator resources.

HMH Family Engagement Builds Knowledge (among Schools and Families) by...

- ◆ Offering in-depth **professional development** for administrators and teachers, including in-person, webinar, and online, self-paced training sessions.
- ◆ Providing **ready-made training and resource materials** for educators.
- ◆ Sharing information via the **five, 90-minute Learn Together Workshops per grade span**. Topics covered in the **Learn Together Workshops** help the families of English learners decode the U.S. educational system.

HMH Family Engagement Connects with Families by...

- ◆ Providing **family-facing materials** distributed through schools, including a **Family Guide in English and Spanish**, audio and video content, and **HMH School Talk**—an academic language game/app.

HMH Family Engagement Connects to Content by...

- ◆ Offering **grade-span specific materials**, for Grades Pre-K, K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 and a **comprehensive, scaffolded curriculum from Pre-K to Grade 12**. This provides support for English learners and families during the preschool and elementary years, a critical period for development that can be enhanced through effective family-school partnerships (Crosnoe, 2013), as well as support during the upper grades, when at-risk learners are at increased risk of dropping out (Callahan, 2013) or otherwise falling farther behind (ACT, 2012).
- ◆ Aligning with the content-area learning in which students are engaged. Instructional examples in the **Family Guides** draw upon HMH’s core programs.

HMH Family Engagement Helps Schools and Districts Meet Requirements by...

- ◆ Specifically addressing the family engagement requirements of Title I, the 2014 USDOE Framework, and the individual needs of EL and other Title I families.
- ◆ Building capacity around the **requirements for Title I** regarding Parental Engagement:
 - » Strengthens and supports district-level parent engagement and Parent Involvement policy for Title I schools;

- » Extends and enhances the school-parent-student compact;
 - » Provides clear information about Title I requirements and the ways parents can be involved;
 - » Provides information that helps schools notify EL parents of program purposes, academic programs, and services provided for their children.
- ◆ Including guidelines for implementation of explicit action plans for family engagement to meet annual Title I requirements and to develop district capacity for effective, sustained family engagement.

(Schools should note as well that the program materials may be equally helpful in engaging Title I families, who may have limited educational backgrounds and low levels of literacy in English.)

Furthermore, ***HMH Family Engagement*** aligns to the research-based standards created by the PTA, the *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships*, which include the following expectations:

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

HMH Family Engagement is a complement, not a competitor, to other academic programs and to local family engagement programs. The creators of ***HMH Family Engagement*** © 2017 have developed a program that can be easily incorporated into the daily work of teachers in diverse schools and districts. To ensure its compatibility with other programs, ***HMH Family Engagement*** includes content and employs approaches that align with student academic content expectations (as articulated by national and key state standards) and with the expectations for effective family engagement (as defined by the National PTA, the U.S. Department of Education, and other available state frameworks).

Strand 1: Effective Strategies for Family Engagement

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life....When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.... Supporting more involvement at school from all parents may be an important strategy for addressing the achievement gap.

Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7

In many respects, Hispanic families share the aspirations and anxieties of many other families nationwide: They are keenly focused on the role completing high school and going to college will play in their children's future. Students and young adults see success in school and college as key to interesting work and a prosperous future...Yet, Hispanic parents, students and young adults also describe concerns, ideas, approaches and relationships with the public school system in ways that are sometimes distinctive...

Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008, p. 1

Defining the Strand

In their book, Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2012) distinguish between *involvement* and *engagement*. Involved parents support their child's education by supporting what happens in the classroom, whereas engagement is a two-way street. Family engagement encompasses many actions, processes, and behaviors. At the broadest level, family engagement is "the collaboration between families and educators that accelerates student learning" (Flamboyant Foundation). Families can be engaged in schools and in their children's schooling in many ways—attending school functions, meeting with teachers, providing time and space for studying, helping their children with schoolwork, contacting school staff, volunteering in the school, and participating in parent organizations (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Epstein (2001) categorizes six types of participation: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating in the community. At the most basic, parents get their children to school, important because higher attendance correlates with higher achievement (Child Trends Data Bank, 2014). A less concrete form of family engagement but crucially important is the family's expectations. Meta-analyses of the research on family engagement point to the importance of families helping children understand the importance of education (Flamboyant Foundation, 2011). High expectations are essential.

Family engagement, in many forms, is crucial to student success. It can support the fast-growing population of English learners. **HMH Family Engagement** © 2017 is built on the premise that when we effectively engage families, we support English learners. The program offers a comprehensive solution, Pre-K–12, to give school districts the tools and strategies to develop and sustain family partnerships, with the ultimate goal of supporting the academic achievement of each student.

Research That Guided the Development of *HMH Family Engagement*:

In the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the first statutory definition of parental involvement was included. In statute, *parental involvement* was defined there as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communications about student academic learning and other activities and including that parents:

- ◆ Play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
- ◆ Are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
- ◆ Are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

This legislation set parameters by which schools must engage programs, activities, and procedures to involve parents in their child’s education—including that specific approaches must be taken with parents of limited English proficient students, that information must be provided in language that parents can understand, and that engagement practices must be based on the most current research (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Proposed legislation strengthens this focus on family engagement.

Experience and research overwhelmingly support the family’s role. Cotton and Wiklund’s (1989) review of the literature on parent involvement concluded that parent involvement of all types and for all levels of students has positive effects on student outcomes. While many studies are more qualitative in nature, quantitative, empirical studies also reveal a meaningful relationship between family engagement and students’ academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). As a result, in their Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) state, “For schools and districts across the U.S., family engagement is rapidly shifting from a low-priority recommendation to an integral part of education reform efforts” (p. 5).

Research into school-family-community partnerships for students suggests that “families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels encourage their children, talk with them about school, help them plan...In other words, all families can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children’s learning” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Her review of 64 studies on family involvement led Boethel (2003) to conclude that “No matter what their race/ethnicity, culture, or income, most families have high aspirations and concerns for their children’s success” (p. 26). Many families of English learners share the same goals and aspirations for their students that other families do. For example, a vast majority (86%) of Hispanic parents agree that students are better off going to college (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008), but many may be uncertain on what role they should assume in the school or feel they are interfering with the work of the teacher (Tinkler, 2002).

What does research show about effective strategies for engaging all families, and particularly EL families, in supporting student learning?

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Invite Participation: At the most fundamental, the key is that schools should adopt practices that encourage parents to participate. Dauber and Epstein (1993) surveyed over 2,000 parents of children in inner-city Baltimore and surveyed schools about practices

designed to involve parents. They found that when schools adopt practices encouraging involvement, involvement levels increase regardless of parental education, marital status, socioeconomic level, and student grade level (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, and Moodie (2009) reviewed the literature on family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs. Their review led them to concur with this conclusion that encouraging participation is key.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Open Communication: The same literature review from Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, and Moodie (2009) suggests that establishing two-way communication and knowledge sharing is key to effective family engagement with diverse families. In their study of the ways in which high-performing schools with large Hispanic populations build collaborative relationships with parents, Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) found that the schools that most effectively engaged parents established a warm, welcoming school environment; made personal contact with parents; and maintained open communication with parents. Kraft and Rogers' (2014) examined the use of individualized messages to communicate student progress to parents. They compared various messaging approaches: no communication, informational messages that highlighted students' behavioral and academic achievements, and actionable messages that suggested what students could do to improve. Of the types of communication, they found actionable messages to be most effective in engaging families for student achievement. Ma, Shen, and Krenn (2014) used national data from the 2007–2008 School and Staffing Survey and related the data to outcomes related to adequate yearly progress (AYP). They found that when urban schools regularly updated their school website (weekly or even daily) this correlated with a higher likelihood of making AYP.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Communicate in Ways Families Can Understand: Bruyere and Salazar (2010) conducted focus groups with Latino parents in two communities to explore approaches to engaging Latino students in science programs. Their findings include the importance of communicating to Hispanic families in language that they will understand and through communication pathways that will reach them. In their study of the relationship between parental involvement and annual yearly progress (AYP) in schools, Ma, Shen, and Krenn (2014) found that urban schools who provided translated materials to EL parents were more likely to make AYP.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Share Home-Based Activities: Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, and Moodie's (2009) literature review also found that emphasizing and sharing learning activities for home is an important element in effective family engagement programs. Their study of different types of EL parent involvement in four elementary school districts suggested to Vera and colleagues (2012) that recommending routines to structure learning at home may be an effective way for parents' to support increased educational achievement. Research reviews by Henderson and Mapp (2002) and Dorfman and Fisher (2002) suggest that those programs that offer home-based strategies that families can employ to support students are particularly effective.

Reviews of research on family engagement also suggests that helping families to create supportive structures in the home may correlate more closely with student achievement than families' involvement in school-based activities (Fan & Chen, 2001; Cotton & Wikeland, 1989). In their policy information report for the Educational Testing Service (ETS), Barton and Coley (2007) suggest that it may be useful to help families see that providing reading materials, facilitating computer access, and

setting limits on media use, for example, all can contribute to a home environment that is conducive to learning. Schaller, Rocha, and Barshinger (2007) studied Mexican immigrant mothers of young children to examine their approaches to supporting their children's education. They observed that these parents showed a positive attitude toward their children's educational achievement and a desire to motivate and participate. They concluded that offering guidance on concrete home-based activities (conversations, daily reading, and other literacy-based activities) could increase students' chances of achieving academic success.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Respect Families: Cummins (1996, 2001) has long argued that to effectively educate diverse ELs, schools and teachers must respect students' languages and cultures. In her description of research-based best practices, Araujo (2009) stresses the importance of practicing culturally relevant teaching and extending and accepting assistance. Adopting *family-centered practice*, which acknowledges the importance of families, respects families, and supports them, is an important principle behind successful family-engagement efforts (McBride, 1999). Vera and colleagues (2012) conducted an investigation on a diverse group of EL parents in four elementary school districts to examine barriers and facilitators of varied types of parent involvement. Their findings also emphasize the importance of collaboration *with* families. Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) studied high-performing schools with large Hispanic populations and concluded that schools that are most effective at involving parents understand and build on parents' cultural values. In their book, *Parents as Partners in Education: Families and School Working Together*, in designing learning experiences for parents and families, Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2012) review the history of parent involvement efforts, discuss relevant demographics shifts, and recommend effective techniques for engaging families. They suggest that parents and families will learn best when parents and families are viewed as assets, with something valuable to contribute. Their review of research led Henderson and Mapp (2002) to recommend that schools that seek to foster deeper family engagement in student learning must:

- ◆ recognize that all parents, whatever their income and education levels and cultural identifications, want to engage in their children's learning and support their academic achievement;
- ◆ develop school faculty and staff's knowledge and skills in effectively engaging families; and
- ◆ foster trusting, respectful, and collaborative relationships between school, community, and families.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Make Content Connections: Rodriguez-Brown, Li, and Albom (1999) conducted a qualitative study of a literacy training program designed for Mexican immigrant parents. They found that when parents were trained specifically on literacy activities that could be done at home (read alouds, conversations about books, modeling, and so on), parents' involvement increased at home and at school. Starkey and Klein (2000) examined the impacts of a parent involvement intervention, and found that when low-income Latino and African American parents were trained to support their children's mathematical learning, their children demonstrated greater gains in mathematical learning than students in a comparison group. Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2012) also emphasize the importance of relevant information.

Clearly communicating the value of programs is important as well. In a study of parental involvement in a dual-language program, Casas, Ryan, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, Ferguson, and Nero (2005) found that Latino parents view academic outcomes as important. This suggests that when informing these families of educational opportunities in the Pre-K–12 setting, school officials would be advised to promote the educational merit and real-world (career) benefits of the programs.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Help EL Families Navigate American Schools: Wood, Shankland, Jordan, and Pollard (2014) consider four decades of research by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, and others, and provide insights into how districts can create systems for sustained family engagement. They suggest that creating transparency for EL families about the American school system is important. Effective family engagement programs provide parents with information on “how to navigate the school and district environments so that they know how and where to offer opinions and input about school improvement” (Wood, Shankland, Jordan, & Pollard, 2014, p. 3).

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Reduce Barriers to Participation: In their study on EL parent participation in four elementary schools, Vera and colleagues (2012) found similar barriers as other researchers have found in family engagement efforts—linguistic barriers, a lack of understanding of the U.S. educational system, a concern about interfering in the work of schools and teachers. In their policy brief, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) analyze key factors to consider in creating effective systems of EL family engagement and list common barriers to parental engagement, including limited language proficiency, parental educational level, cultural differences, and school-based barriers. Park and McHugh’s (2014) research review and field research led them to conclude that EL parents’ language levels can present significant barriers to immigrant and refugee parents’ participation in learning programs. But these barriers can be overcome. In examining the specific approaches of schools that were most effective at establishing effective systems of family engagement, Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) found that these schools made specific accommodations to facilitate parent involvement. Boethel (2003) synthesized 64 research studies on family involvement among racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse families. The review led her to conclude that while researchers identify barriers to families’ engagement in schools (such as time, child care, language, cultural differences and knowledge), effective school programs can overcome these barriers.

Schools That Effectively Engage Families...Use Technology Purposefully: In engaging all families in school-family partnerships, technology offers new ways for teachers and families to communicate. Zieger and Tan (2012) found that providing access to an online grade book led parents to communicate with the children about their grades and communicate with the teacher about student performance. In another study, teachers sent a weekly, individualized message to parents, documenting student’s performance in a credit-recovery program. The researchers studying the effects of this school-to-home communication found that messages that emphasized what students could improve appeared to be particularly effective. Furthermore, the intervention appeared to increase the probability of students completing the course (Kraft & Rogers, 2014). Email messages, online grade books, individualized messages, updated websites all are effective ways to use technology to increase the school-family connection (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2012). Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), too, emphasize the important role of technology in linking parents and families with their children’s schools.

In conclusion, employing multiple and varied approaches to engagement appears to be most effective. As Reynolds and Clements (2005) state, “School-family partnerships that provide many ways to strengthen involvement are the most likely to impact children’s academic, social, and emotional learning, and lead to school success” (p. 125). To effectively engage families, schools must attend to *how* to effectively engage families (through clear communication, communication in the home language, culturally sensitive approaches, the use of technology, and so on) and to *what* content to effectively engage families with (content knowledge, information about the U.S. school system, and so on).

From Research to Practice: Effective Strategies for Family Engagement

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 employs varied approaches to engaging families. Resources are designed to engage and be accessible to families.

The materials and training for both educators and families are designed to develop capacity for effective, sustained family engagement. With the ultimate goal of supporting students' academic success, resources are designed to:

- ◆ Build cultural competency
- ◆ Foster communication
- ◆ Strengthen relationships
- ◆ Build community among diverse groups

The research on effective family engagement for all families, and particularly for the families of English learners, suggests the following key elements:

Best Practices for Effective Family Engagement as Exemplified in <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>	
Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Families should be welcomed and invited to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ In <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>, the first of the six Program Standards is:<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community.◆ The first of the five Learn Together Workshops is titled, Welcome to School, and offer an invitation to families to participate and collaborate.◆ The program attends to details large and small. Suggestions for Program Leaders in the Program Implementation Guide include that leaders should invite the front-office person and bilingual educators or aides to greet families and sign them in as they enter for the workshops. Video for each grade span entitled First Day of School introduces families to the school environment and to the school staff.

Best Practices for Effective Family Engagement as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Materials should help to maintain open communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ For schools, the program includes multiple resources including information on cultural competencies to facilitate effective communications and a Communications Toolkit to support effective outreach and open communication. ◆ Within the toolkit, schools are given ample materials to communicate via varied media (including social media) and direct outreach. Channels specific to EL family communication include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Top Spanish (or other) language TV and radio stations » Local Spanish (or other) language newspapers and newsletters » Websites and social media that are popular with EL families » Active community groups/centers frequented by EL families » Community businesses that cater to EL families ◆ The program’s varied approaches ensure that EL families will get the information they need. ◆ For families, the Family Guides consistently encourage open communication with educators and the HMH School Talk an academic language game app helps to build families’ ability to discuss and communicate about academic topics.
Materials should be culturally sensitive and honor the home language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The program’s Family Guide is offered in both accessible English and Spanish. ◆ The importance of a child’s first language is emphasized throughout the Family Guide. Families are encouraged to use their home language to build a foundation of literacy and language instruction. ◆ Insights Guides, in the Program Implementation Guide offers background information designed to increase cultural competencies. ◆ Suggestions for Program Leaders in the Program Implementation Guide include that leaders should learn or review simple phrases in the language(s) of participating families to welcome them and demonstrate respect for their home language
Materials should be grade- and/or content-specific.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The program offers grade-span specific materials, for grades Pre-K, K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 and a comprehensive, scaffolded curriculum from Pre-K to Grade 12. ◆ The program aligns with the content-area learning in which students are engaged. Instructional examples in the Family Guides draw upon HMH’s core programs. ◆ The program’s videos were created with English learners in mind, and provide additional support for the teaching of important content.

Best Practices for Effective Family Engagement as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Materials should offer home-based strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The <i>HMH Family Engagement Family Guide</i> offers practical activities and strategies that can be used at home, including suggestions around each of the core qualities of a scholar such as these: <div data-bbox="613 478 1369 751" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"><p>The family can help a Scholar be responsible in these ways:</p><ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be certain your Scholar goes to school every day.2. Plan ahead so your Scholar arrives at school on time.3. Provide a well-lighted, quiet place for your Scholar to do homework every night.4. If your Scholar must be absent, be sure your Scholar makes up missed schoolwork.</div><p>or these:</p><div data-bbox="613 856 1369 1129" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"><p>The family can support a Scholar to be curious in these ways:</p><ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask your Scholar what interests him or her, and why.2. Explore, talk, and learn with your Scholar, at home and in the community.3. Go to the library together to learn things your Scholar is curious about.4. Encourage your Scholar to ask questions.</div> <p>Within each Family Guide, sections titled More to Learn and Do Together offer additional strategies and practical activities to extend coverage of the topic introduced at the <i>Learn Together Workshop</i>.</p>
Participation should be encouraged by families of students of all ages, from K through 12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The program offers grade-span specific materials, for grades Pre-K, K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 and a comprehensive, scaffolded curriculum from Pre-K to Grade 12. This provides support for English learners and families during the early years, a critical period for development that can be supported through effective family-school partnerships (Crosnoe, 2013), as well as support during the upper grades, when at-risk learners are at increased risk of dropping out (Callahan, 2013) or otherwise falling farther behind (ACT, 2012).

Best Practices for Effective Family Engagement as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Approaches should reduce barriers to participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research suggests that an unwelcoming school climate and lack of communication create barriers to family engagement (see policy brief by Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> is designed to welcome families into the school and create open, two-way communication between schools and families. ◆ In the <i>Learn Together Workshops</i>, families and educators view at videos that support the topic and are serve as springboards for discussion and activities. <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> features 40 videos, in accessible English and in Spanish (with English subtitles). Filmed in schools, homes, and in the community in a documentary style, these videos provide context, support, and models for EL families in the program. The video resources are designed to reduce barriers, facilitate conversation, and support comprehension. ◆ Having childcare available and offering communications in languages other than English reduce barriers to family engagement (Klotz, 2006). In <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>, the Program Implementation Guide includes steps for the Program Leader to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Choose dates and times for the <i>Learn Together Workshops</i> that are most convenient for both families and educators. » Advertise each upcoming workshop in ways that will reach the intended audiences. » Arrange childcare and/or a play area.
Approaches should utilize technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Digital resources offer easy online access for families and educators. Professional development opportunities include face-to-face, online, and webinar options.

HMH Family Engagement is explicit in helping educators reduce barriers to engagement. The **If/Why/Then Recommendations** in the **Educator Guide** are designed to do just that:

If/Why/Then **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Situations You May Encounter with EL Families and Suggestions for Addressing Them

WELCOMING FAMILIES/GENERAL COMMUNICATION

IF: Families are hesitant to engage in the program.

WHY: The families may not fully understand the purpose of the *Learn Together Workshop*. They may have never come to school before, or only come to school when something is wrong.

THEN: Warmly greet the families and guide them to their table. Let them know that this is a meeting to help them understand what is expected of them and how to help their Scholar do his or her best in school. Take the families to a table with other families that speak their language if at all possible. This will help them feel more comfortable.

IF: A family consisting of the parents or guardians, the Scholar, and the Scholar's older sibling comes in. The older sibling may be the family's "translator."

WHY: The parents or guardians realize that the school meeting is important and want to understand what is being said.

THEN: Acknowledge and thank the family for wanting to understand as much as possible, but assure them that their Table Facilitator will communicate with the parent/guardian directly (not the older sibling). The older sibling may not accurately translate the information; also, having a child of any age be the translator diminishes the parent/guardian's direct role in his or her Scholar's education.

IF: The family is quiet and does not offer information or participate.

WHY: The families are unsure of what is expected of them.

THEN: If possible, model the activity with another EL family or with another teacher. If other EL families are receptive, possibly pair up the families to do the exercises together.

Strand 2: Effective Strategies for Reaching English Learners and Their Families

With the increase of ELL students in schools, it is imperative that schools and families work together to achieve educational success for this population.

Araujo, 2009, p. 117

Defining the Strand

The U.S. government in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, defines English language learners as:

...students 3–21 years old who are enrolled in elementary or secondary school but who do not speak, read, write, or understand English well enough to either (1) reach a proficient level on state achievement tests, (2) be successful in a classroom in which English is the language of instruction, or (3) fully participate in society. (Learning Point Associates, 2009)

English learners (ELs) are one of the fastest-growing groups of students in the United States (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006b). They represent a significant portion of the American school-age population. Thus, it is imperative that teachers meet the specific needs of this population. But how best to meet these needs?

English learners, like all students, benefit from effective instruction. Generally speaking, the principles of sound instruction for native English speakers hold true for ELs (Fitzgerald, 1995a). But additional tailored approaches are effective with ELs and EL families.

While ELs share some characteristics, they are not all the same. English learners [and their families] are a diverse population who “...enter U.S. schools with a wide range of language proficiencies... and of subject-matter knowledge. They differ in educational background, expectations of schooling, socioeconomic status, age of arrival in the United States, and personal experiences coming to and living in the United States” (Christian, 2006, p. 2). Klingner, Hoover, and Baca (2008) emphasize these differences in the population as well—differences in formal schooling experiences, economic and cultural living situations, and English proficiency levels. Thus, to meet the needs of these learners, educators must consider the cultural context and the contexts in which they interact (Koss-Chioino & Vargas, 1999).

HMH Family Engagement engages ELs and their families in building knowledge and skills. Materials to build cultural competency; bilingual materials that respect and honor students’ and families’ home language; accessible materials, with audio, visuals, and video; and instructional materials aligned with the students’ core work all act in concert to best meet the needs of EL families and scholars.

Research That Guided the Development of *HMH Family Engagement: English Learners and Their Families*

Who are English learners? An English learner is “a student whose native language is not English, or who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant” (Ross, 2015).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who believed in the powerful role of education in creating opportunities and ensuring equality (LBJ Presidential Library, online). A primary focus of this legislation was on improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged, and closing achievement gaps. When it was reauthorized in 2001, as the No Child Left Behind Act, provisions were included in Title I to ensure that states test ELs in core subjects and be held accountable for their performance. Title III of the ESEA provides resources to states and schools to establish, implement, and sustain high-quality programs designed to help English learners develop language proficiency and meet rigorous academic standards.

Unlike other subgroups specified under ESEA, ELs “are defined primarily by their targeted outcome—English language proficiency” (Ramsey & O’Day, 2010). Fulfilling the requirements of ESEA—that students be tested in core subjects and meet state standards, that their parents be informed, in language they can understand, of their child’s progress, and so on—creates challenges for schools in terms of the design of curriculum and engagement efforts, professional development for educators, resource allocation, and communication plans.

As discussed at length in previous sections of this report, parents and families can be key partners in promoting the success of English learners in the schools. While family engagement holds great promise, creating school-family partnerships with EL families can present challenges because of various social, cultural, and linguistic factors, which may pose barriers to communication and outreach efforts. Language is one barrier that can be overcome with targeted approaches.

Because many adults in EL families do not have high levels of English fluency (see for example the Pew Hispanic Center, Hakimzadeh & Cohn, 2002), they may fail to understand teacher communications and school information. In their quantitative study of involvement in an after-school science program for Latino students, Bruyere and Salazar (2010) found that parents were simply unaware of some of the available opportunities because materials were not offered in Spanish or were not disseminated through networks that would reach them.

Low levels of English proficiency also suggest some important cultural implications. Use of English is connected to assimilation into the American culture (Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002). This suggests that EL parents and families may have stronger ties to their home cultures than to the U.S. culture. (And suggests that parents and families may benefit from targeted cultural and systems knowledge, particularly vis-à-vis the American educational system and the systems of the local school districts. This is discussed further below.)

Linse (2011) cautions that family-school partnerships can be designed in ways that do not account for or welcome the cultural backgrounds or perspectives of diverse families, particularly EL families. Varied approaches will help schools reach families from culturally and linguistically diverse

backgrounds (Dorries, 2002). Being responsive to the cultural contexts and practicing cultural sensitivity is imperative in working successfully with the EL population (Chrispeels & González, 2004; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

For schools and districts planning outreach to EL families, reaching families with bilingual materials demonstrates an affirmation of these families' cultural heritage. Hobbs' (2004) experiences with recruiting ELs and EL families, specifically Latino families, for participation in Extension programs in Oregon, supported the usefulness of Spanish or bilingual materials. Similarly, by reaching out to families and students in their native language, schools give the message that they welcome these families into the community and see them as assets as they are. In presenting its framework for increasing instructional rigor for ELs, the Council of the Great City Schools (2014) recommends use of learners' native language. In her overview of educational innovations for ELs, Tung (2013) stresses the need for bilingual instruction when she argues that schools should "support the acquisition of academic English, while simultaneously developing the students' native language and teaching the students content" (p. 3) in order to develop the students' literacy skills in both languages and support their cultural identity.

Linse (2011) compiles varied theories on school-home partnerships to propose taxonomies as frameworks for school efforts. She suggests that schools consider practices on a continuum of those that are very unresponsive to families' needs and backgrounds to those that are very responsive (for example, hand-written notes from teachers written in English in cursive compared with printed letters written in the families' home language, with visual or oral cues provided as necessary alongside the written communication).

In addition to using families' home languages, other approaches are effective in making communications accessible and in fostering open communication with EL families. These include:

- ◆ Incorporating visuals and utilizing visual messages
- ◆ Opening paths for both one- and two-way communications (one-way communications might include newsletters, notes, letters; two-way communications might include telephone calls, email, home visits, parent-teacher conferences)
- ◆ Using understandable language (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2012)

Panferov (2010) uses the illustrative stories of two EL parents to propose that schools should learn from parents themselves. She suggests that school and districts can reach out to EL families to find out how best to reach them and communicate with them.

In addition to recognizing the importance of ELs' and EL families' primary language, educators must consider scholars' and families' cultural and literacy backgrounds in their native language. Research points to the complexity of the relationship between students' academic performance and their literacy experiences in the home (Genesee & Riches, 2006). In a study of the receptive English and Spanish vocabulary knowledge in Hispanic bilingual school children in Grades 1, 3, and 6, Umbel and Oller (1994) found that students with larger Spanish vocabularies also demonstrated stronger knowledge and use of English vocabulary, suggesting that first language literacy practices in the home also contribute to students' performance with English in school. The review of EL research conducted

by Learning Point Associates (2009) led to the same conclusion: “well-developed word level, reading comprehension, and writing skills in the native language were linked to strong performance with the same skills in English” (p. 8). Similarly, Riches and Genesee’s review of EL literacy research led them to conclude that “ELLs with initial L1 literacy experiences, such as emergent and family literacy, as well as those with well-developed L1 literacy experiences, progress more quickly and successfully in L2 literacy development” (p. 83). For educators, this means that supporting students’ L1 literacy experiences, and reaching the family and community regarding the importance of literacy development, in English and/or in the primary language, are helpful strategies for developing English literacy. While communicating with EL families can be a challenge for teachers, Lee (2006) presents an illustrative example of one student, teacher, and parents, and suggests that one strategy for parent communication is to use the children’s own texts as a means of school-home communication.

In addition to reaching families through their home language—or through materials written in accessible English and other responsive modes and forms that engage ELs in literacy development—researchers and practitioners suggest some additional, effective approaches to reach ELs and EL families.

In researching the challenge of the high drop-out rates of English learners, Callahan (2013) concluded that, in addition to engaging learners in their primary language, two other key reforms are needed:

1. English learners need increased and more effective academic exposure.
2. Schools and educators must shift from a deficit perspective to an additive perspective.

In terms of family-engagement practices, these findings suggest the benefits of aligning efforts with the academic standards and expectations for scholars, and of welcoming EL families into the schools as assets to the learning process.

Experience with the 4-H program in Oregon led Hobbs (2004) to conclude that, in addition to Spanish or bilingual communications, the following are effective:

- ◆ Nontraditional content
- ◆ Additional training for those who work with the population [Note that more discussion on training is included in Strand 3 of this report, on reaching adult learners and providing professional development].

In terms of nontraditional content, researchers suggest that some specific content supports the successful engagement of EL families.

Culturally sensitive practices (which begin with some of the language and literacy practices described above) are essential to programs’ effectiveness. Administrators and teachers serve important roles in establishing a culturally competent school environment. A culturally competent school is “generally defined as one that honors, respects, and values diversity in theory and in practice and where teaching and learning are made relevant and meaningful to students of various cultures” (Klotz, 2006, p. 11).

Just as educators must do more to understand families’ cultural background, families can benefit from learning more about U.S. culture and systems. Park and McHugh (2014) produced a report for the

Migration Policy Institute on strategies to address barriers of literacy, culture, and systems knowledge to promote effective immigrant parent involvement in early childhood programs. Their research review and field research suggests the importance of U.S. cultural and systems knowledge for increased parental involvement in positive outcomes for students. Families need to learn more about the U.S. culture and educational systems in order to be fully engaged in supporting their children’s school learning. Effective school programs should support families with information and resources that will help them better understand how schools work and what is expected of both families and students (see Boethel, 2003, for synthesis of 64 studies on family engagement). Chrispeels and González (2004) concur: “immigrant parents need opportunities to learn about the school system and their roles and rights in their child’s education.” In their study, when a focus of parent education is on increasing knowledge of how to be involved, education programs can effect change, even after a short time.

Research suggests that there are some other specific program modifications, in terms of planning and delivery, which can be made to more effectively tailor programs to parents with limited English proficiency or with limited knowledge of U.S. systems.

Research on ELs as students suggests that they benefit from opportunities for collaboration. Research shows that collaboration and interaction in the classroom result in improved performance and skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In her research, Collier (1995) has found that “classes in school that are highly interactive...are likely to provide the kind of social setting for natural language acquisition to take place, simultaneously with academic and cognitive development” (online). In her research on English learners and mainstream learners, Langer (1995, 2000, 2001) has identified discussion—when used to develop students’ understandings rather than as an assessment of recall—to be a particularly important element of effective English language arts classrooms. In their review of literacy research for English learners, Genesee and Riches found that “virtually every study in this corpus reported that ELLs in interactive learning environments demonstrated improvements in reading and writing or behaviors related to reading and writing as a consequence of participation in an interactive learning environment” (p. 118). So, collaborative and interactive learning environments are suggested for EL families.

Similarly, other research on students with limited English proficiency has implications for EL family engagement efforts.

Among others, in her practical introduction to working with ELs, *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge*, Haynes (2007) suggests these strategies as particularly effective for tailoring instruction for English learners:

- ◆ Using visuals and graphic organizers
- ◆ Choosing essential vocabulary
- ◆ Using flexible grouping
- ◆ Using diversity as a resource

All of these can be applied to learning opportunities for EL families—who can benefit from visuals and graphics (that make language more accessible); who can benefit from learning new academic

vocabulary; who can benefit from partnering with educators within the school or district; and who benefit from being perceived as assets to the process, rather than deficits.

Gardner's seminal work (1993) emphasized the need to access and integrate multiple modes to meet students' learning styles and varied intelligences. *Learning style* is used to describe the ways that students best focus on learning and process new information. Because students' preferred learning styles vary, "the same instructional environment, methods, and resources will be effective for some learners and ineffective for others" (Burke & Dunn, 1998, p. 104). Aligning classroom conditions to students' preferred learning style can improve learning (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1997). By supporting linguistic and nonlinguistic (visual, sensory, and so on) means of acquiring information, teachers support increased reflection and recall and maximize learning (Kapusnik & Hauslein, 2001; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Haynes (2007) suggests that considering the learning styles of students is especially crucial to supporting ELs' learning, particularly by incorporating tactile and kinesthetic forms of learning as appropriate.

In their 2005 review of research on multimedia for second language learning, Plass and Jones identified the following research-based principles relevant to the context of second language acquisition:

1. Students learn more from text with pictures than from text alone.
2. Students show greater language acquisition when they are presented the choice of verbal vs. visual annotations.
3. Advance organizers to help students better comprehend during reading and listening.

In defining a framework that can be used with ELs in this age of rigorous standards and high-stakes assessment, the Council of the Great City Schools (2014) recommends a focus on language study and discipline-specific, academic-language study. As important as this content, though, are that the focused study be done using non-negotiable, effective instructional practices, which include aligning content to high expectations and relevant standards, providing scaffolds, providing supportive school structures, and providing quality professional development for educators, designed to build the district- and school-level capacity. Similarly, as their scholars do, EL families benefit from programs that align learning to high expectations, the clearly communicate standards, and that are embedded within supportive school structures. For these to be in place, educators need professional development, which will be discussed further in the next section of this report.

From Research to Practice: Effective Strategies for English Learners and Their Families

HMH Family Engagement © 2017 specifically addresses the unique needs and challenges of the diverse and growing EL population, Pre-K through Grade 12, and their families.

The program employs effective strategies to reach EL scholars and their families, and aligns with research on culturally responsive communication practices (for example, see Linse, 2011).

Best Practices for Reaching English Learners and Families as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Set and communicate high expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> establishes high standards and communicates high expectations. One of the core principles of the program is to accentuate the belief that every English learner is a Scholar, a term used throughout <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>. The program’s grade-specific materials, Pre-K through Grade 12, encourage families and educators to set high expectations for each Scholar by tapping into the strengths and potential that each student brings to the classroom. Specific characteristics, or Scholar Qualities, that will help ensure academic success are taught and reinforced throughout the program. ◆ The program’s Family Guide offers suggestions for families to set high expectations for their Scholars, through tips such as these: <div data-bbox="602 1125 1325 1528" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>The family can encourage a Scholar to do his or her best in school in these ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have confidence in your Scholar and know and support his or her strengths. 2. Encourage your Scholar to keep striving and to do his or her best. 3. Praise your Scholar for working hard and making progress. 4. Help your Scholar set goals and make a plan to reach those goals. </div>
Align content to the core instructional program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The program’s grade-specific materials, Pre-K through Grade 12, align to core content in each subject area at each level. Examples of academic content from HMH core programs are included for each grade span.

**Best Practices for Reaching English Learners and Families as Exemplified in
HMH Family Engagement**

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
<p>Communicate in ways that will reach the intended audience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Family Guides are an integral part of <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>. Written in accessible English and accessible Spanish, the Family Guides are highly visual so that the audience can access information. A Visual Agenda found in each Family Guide provides a road map for the activities that will take place at each Learn Together Workshop. ◆ The Communications Toolkit offers specific tools and strategies for reaching English Learner (EL) families. ◆ Channels specific to EL family communication include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Top Spanish (or other) language TV and radio stations » Local Spanish (or other) language newspapers and newsletters » Websites and social media that are popular with EL families » Active community groups/centers frequented by EL families » Community businesses that cater to EL families
<p>Practice cultural sensitivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> recognizes and honors students' and families' cultural backgrounds, while explicitly communicating specific Scholar Qualities, the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes that lead to success in school. ◆ Insights Guides in the Program Implementation Guide address cultural perspectives held by some English learner populations that may be inconsistent with the expectations of the U.S. education system and provide practical recommendations that educators may use to address these inconsistencies in a culturally respectful manner.
<p>Provide responsive materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> provides materials that are written at an accessible level, whether in Spanish or in English. ◆ HMH School Talk an academic language game app provides engaging game-based English language learning and practice for families with a focus on learning and applying language that they need to communicate with their child's school.

**Best Practices for Reaching English Learners and Families as Exemplified in
HMH Family Engagement**

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
<p>Provide bilingual materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Program Implementation Guide includes a Program Summary for Families in the following languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, French, Haitian Creole, Arabic, and Somali. ◆ Accessible family-facing materials include a Family Guide in English and Spanish. <div data-bbox="773 564 1097 984" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Audio support and videos are also offered in accessible English and Spanish. ◆ The program’s Educator Guide includes a section on “Spanish Phrases for Educators.”
<p>Foster collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> aligns with the PTA® National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, which clearly support and build collaboration. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community » Standard 2: Communicating effectively » Standard 3: Supporting student success » Standard 4: Speaking up for every child » Standard 5: Sharing power » Standard 6: Collaborating with community ◆ The Learn Together Workshops are designed to be collaborative, involving families and educators in working together towards a common goal—student academic success. ◆ The Welcome portion of the Learn Together Workshop agenda includes time to “Meet Your Table Team,” building the kinds of relationships that can foster collaboration.

**Best Practices for Reaching English Learners and Families as Exemplified in
HMH Family Engagement**

Recommendation	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
<p>Deliver information through various modes (including audio and visual).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> offers audio and video content for learners who access information more easily in an auditory or visual format. English and Spanish audio support is provided for Family Guides and the program features 40 videos in accessible English and Spanish. ◆ Family materials, like the Family Guides, are written in accessible English, with strong visual support to ensure comprehension by ELs of all language backgrounds and who have limited English proficiency and literacy.
<p>Increase families' knowledge of the U.S. school system, the scholar's school or district, and how to participate and increase involvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Topics covered in the Learn Together Workshops help the families of English learners decode the U.S. educational system. Through their involvement with the program, EL families will have the skills and knowledge to be supporters and advocates for their Scholars. ◆ Tips in the Family Guide include suggestions such as: "Being at school every day is the law. Parents must make sure their Scholar goes to school every day." And, "If your child will be absent, it's important to call the school." ◆ Family Guide Activity Pages include information on all core topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Welcome to School introduces families to the people and policies of the school like attendance. » Academic Achievement focuses on the main academic subjects and how they are taught. » Support at Home focuses on some of the many ways families can help their Scholars outside of school. Assessment Success reviews the various types of assessments and what they mean. » Technology reviews technology with a focus on how schools use technology in the classroom and to communicate with families. <div data-bbox="662 1465 1383 1873" data-label="Image"> <p>Your Scholar can be absent for different reasons. Some of these reasons are allowed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Scholar is sick. • Your family needs to go to a funeral. • Your Scholar has a doctor or dentist appointment. <p>allowed absences = excused absences</p> </div>

HMH Family Engagement provides tools and resources to reach families in culturally and linguistically respectful ways, such as by building educator knowledge of key Spanish phrases:

Spanish Phrases **FOR EDUCATORS**

Bienvenidos.

Welcome.

Hola, mi nombre es _____ . Yo soy la maestra (el maestro) de su hijo (hija).

Hello, my name is _____. I am your child's teacher. (o = masculine; a = feminine)

Es un placer conocerlos.

It's nice to meet you.

Por favor, perdone mi español. Apenas comienzo a aprenderlo.

Please excuse my Spanish. I'm learning.

¿Cuántos hijos tienen?

How many children do you have?

¿De qué edades?

What ages?

¿Ha asistido su hijo a un programa preescolar?

Has your child attended a preschool program?

¿Tiene su hijo algún problema que requiere atención especial?

Does your child have any condition that requires special attention?

¿Cuál es su número de teléfono?

What is your phone number?

Tiene que estar aquí a tiempo.

You have to be here on time.

¿Tiene preguntas?

Do you have questions?

¿Lo comprende?

Do you understand?

¿Por favor, pueden venir a la escuela hoy?

Please, can you come to school today?

¿Está usted disponible para ser voluntario?

Are you available to volunteer?

Si usted no puede pagar, quizás podemos usar los fondos de la escuela.

If you can't pay, we may be able to use school funds.

Por favor, espere un minuto.

Please wait a minute.

Puedo conseguir un intérprete.

I can get an interpreter.

Por favor/Gracias/De nada/Adiós

Please/Thank you/You're welcome/Good-bye

You are setting a good example as a parent for your child by being involved in his or her education.

Usted como padre está dando un buen ejemplo a su hijo al involucrarse en su educación.

Strand 3: Effective Strategies for Professional Development and Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners

A common refrain from educators is that they have a strong desire to work with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to develop stronger home-school partnerships of shared responsibility for children's outcomes, but they do not know how to accomplish this.

Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 7

By treating family engagement as an area of practice in school improvement and providing sustained, systemic support, district leaders can help schools implement high-impact family engagement activities.

Wood, Shankland, Jordan, & Pollard, 2014, p. 9

Professional development can no longer just be about exposing teachers to a concept or providing basic knowledge about a teaching methodology. Instead, professional development in an era of accountability requires a change in a teacher's practice that leads to increases in student learning.

Gulamhussein, 2013, p. 6

Defining the Strand

We talk about student performance gaps but for many educators there is a knowledge gap. They enter the profession knowing their content and pedagogy, but without truly understanding their students and families, and what strategies they can employ to most effectively engage them in effective partnerships. Most states lack course requirements on family involvement for certification (Epstein, 2001), or those that do focus only on early childhood and special education (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010), and so these skills and practices must be learned on the job.

As Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stress, "Many states, districts, and schools struggle with how to execute partnerships and cultivate and sustain positive relationships with families" (p. 7). There is a need in the field for practical tools and outcome-oriented family engagement strategies that can help schools meet their goals and align with the outcomes specified by policies on family engagement. A look at family, school, and community engagement efforts as an integral part of education reform led researchers at the Harvard Family Research Project to conclude that "Capacity building is crucial because individuals often lack the knowledge and skills to implement effective family engagement..." (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010, p. 8).

With **HMH Family Engagement**, schools and families come together for five **Learn Together Workshops** per school year. To ensure implementation of effective family engagement practices, **Professional Development** designed for educators and administrators is provided through face-to-face training sessions, webinars, and online e-learning modules. With **HMH Family Engagement**, educators build the skills and knowledge they need to successfully engage families for student success.

Research That Guided the Development of *HMH Family Engagement: Professional Development and Adult Learners*

Professional development is essential in any organization. As Alves (2014) argues in the opening of her article on resources to promote family engagement, “When organizations invest in the development of their workforce, they create communities in which professionals are skilled, knowledgeable, and motivated to take on new challenges.” To remain effective within changing demographics and contexts, educators must continue to engage in professional learning. Improving their knowledge and skills makes teachers more effective (Villareal, 2005). And substantial professional development has been shown to significantly impact student achievement (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

Particularly in terms of effectively engaging families, educators need professional support. A 2012 survey from MetLife (2013) reports that a majority of teachers and principals cite engaging parents and families as a significant professional challenge. To effectively partner with families, “School and district staff need to be knowledgeable about the assets and funds of knowledge available in the communities where they work. They also need skills in the realms of cultural competency and of building trusting relationships with families” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 10). Zarate (2007) conducted a study examining Latino parent perceptions of their role in their children’s education, school and teacher expectations of parental involvement, parent involvement initiatives, and students’ perceptions of their parents’ role. This study led Zarate, too, to conclude that a key policy and program recommendation for schools and organizations is to provide professional learning on best practices for increasing family involvement.

Worth noting here, too, is that in family-engagement efforts, the learners are not just the administrators and educators who work in the school and district. Learners include the parents and families as adult learners, who have specific needs and learning orientations (Marienau & Segal, 2006). Wood, Shankland, Jordan, and Pollard (2014) summarize the key elements of effective district-family partnerships and emphasize that successful programs must provide training and supports for both educators *and* families. Learning opportunities for both audiences—teachers and families—must loop back to student learning and explicitly link to student achievement (Zepeda, 2015).

The factors that make professional and adult learning efforts successful—or not—are complex and varied (Guskey, 2003).

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) looked at the body of research on learning in their seminal work, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. They concluded that adult learners benefit from the same learner-centered approaches, building off of the strengths, interests, and needs of the learners, from which Pre-K–12 students benefit. Similarly, as with younger learners, adults benefit from knowledge-centered approaches. Another important approach for reaching adult learners is creating community-centered environments, which encourage collaboration.

Garet and colleagues (2001) conducted a study of teachers’ self-reported increases in learning as a result of professional development, and found that those opportunities that (1) focused on content, (2) provided opportunities for active learning, and (3) aligned with other learning activities appeared to be more effective at impacting participants’ learning.

Cranton (1994) argues that effective adult learning should be transformative, and result in a change in the learner’s basic worldview and perception of his or her capacities to effect change. In the field of family engagement, transformative learning might include shifts in the level of expectations for English learners and a growing belief in their academic potential.

When it comes to planning effective professional learning, research and experience suggest that it is crucial to both consider the delivery and the content of professional learning. Both are key to the success of professional development efforts.

Content Recommendations for Effective Professional Development around Family Engagement:

In her review of effective practices for professional development, Steiner (2004) emphasizes the importance of the content of professional learning—both the content of the subject and knowledge of the learners and their strategies for learning.

In the case of family engagement, professional learning might focus on cultural competence, understandings of families’ cultural and linguistic diversity, processes of second-language acquisition, strategies and tools for effective engagement, and so on. Content for adult parent learners might center on better understanding the U.S. educational system and the local school system (Breiseth, 2011). Research suggests that content-based professional learning is more effective. Professional learning should be focused on the content relevant to teachers’ practice, rather than more generically focused on skills and strategies (Gullamhussein, 2013). For many adult learners, learning is practical, and is done to solve a specific problem, (Cranton, 1994) and, as such, should focus on content that is relevant and applicable.

Wood, Shankland, Jordan, and Pollard (2014) suggest that step one is that school and district staff and teachers must receive training on how to create a warm learning environment that welcomes family members into the school. (In training, this might include focusing on the ways that families can contribute, modeling and role playing respectful interactions, developing a consumer orientation, and so on.)

In their book, *Parents as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together*, Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2012) emphasize the importance of teachers developing sociocultural consciousness for their work with diverse families. For educators working with culturally and linguistically diverse families, learning specific information about various cultures, such as the preferred communication protocols, beliefs on child development, and how families would like to participate in their child’s education, can help educators to be more responsive and respectful (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2012). In addition to exploring the cultures and backgrounds of their students, educators can also explore their own culture and values, to build greater empathy for others.

Alves (2014) suggests effective professional learning for increased family engagement must address these topics:

- ◆ Technology: PD should support educators in using technology to reach families.
- ◆ Real-world examples: PD should involve professionals in solving real cases.
- ◆ Useful approaches: PD should provide educators with clear, concrete, usable examples of strong family engagement practices.

Spielberg (2011) reports on the development of a rubric that organizes the knowledge and skills teachers need to be effective with family engagement into three areas:

1. Beliefs and mindsets: Teachers need to value and respect families, show cultural sensitivity, and see family engagement as an important responsibility.
2. Relationships and communication systems: To engage families, teachers need to create relationships and foster accessible, easy-to-understand communications.
3. Core instructional program: To support student achievement, educators must work with families to set high expectations for student success, clearly communicate the content of the curriculum, standards, and assessments, share data, and provide resources and strategies to support learning at home.

Epstein (2001) proposes that to proceed purposefully in establishing effective partnerships with families, teachers must learn research-based approaches, effective policies and practices, and organizational strategies.

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) emphasize that professional learning programs for family engagement must link family-engagement initiatives with student learning, emphasize strategies for building respectful and trustful school-family partnerships, and build participants' intellectual, social, and human capital.

Regardless of the specific content of the professional development program, to be effective, professional learning must not just transmit content. PD must focus on implementation (Gullamhussein, 2013). Bridging learning into practice is essential.

Delivery Recommendations for Effective Professional Development around Family Engagement:

Whatever the content of professional learning, some key design and delivery elements make the learning more effective for adult learners.

Before delivering any training, administrators should ensure that teachers are ready to learn new techniques and content (Patton & Wanless, 2013). Asking teachers questions about their past experiences with family engagement, their levels of confidence, stress, or comfort with family engagement efforts, and their perceptions of their workloads will help administrators plan accordingly.

Zepeda (2015) describes the various factors of successful job-embedded learning and emphasizes that professional development should be:

- ◆ Active, and involve educators in constructing knowledge;
- ◆ Collaborative, and invite educators to partner with others;
- ◆ Job-specific, and situated in the educators' practices.

Other researchers agree with these key recommendations.

Active: Epstein (1995) offers an overview of theory and guidelines for developing effective school/family/community partnerships. She suggests that in effective school-family partnership programs, successful professional development requires re-thinking delivery so that professional development is not a session in which participants receive some information,

but rather that learning involves educators in active learning and action teams “working together and with parents to develop, implement, evaluate, and continue to improve practices of partnership” (p. 710)

Collaborative: Research on professional learning points to the benefits of collaboration. Patton and Wanless (2013) emphasize the importance of teachers perceiving social support as they explore new practices and techniques. Strong, collaborative learning communities within the school can foster deeper teacher learning (Borko, 2004). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) emphasize that professional learning programs for family engagement must provide collective and collaborative learning situations and opportunities for the application of new skills.

Job-Specific: When they engage in role-plays, simulations, practice conversations, and opportunities to try out approaches in terms of real-world examples, research suggests this can build trust among professional development participants (Patton & Wanless, 2013). Steiner (2004) also emphasizes the importance of coherence. Professional learning should be part of an overall improvement strategy.

Additionally, Alves (2014) suggests that when planning effective professional learning for increased family engagement, schools and districts must:

1. Incorporate family engagement systematically into professional learning.
2. Offer flexible training that recognizes the needs of professionals.

Technology can be useful both in incorporating family engagement and in offering flexible training. In terms of technology, studies suggest that the benefits of online professional development are similar to those of face-to-face learning opportunities (Herold, 2013). Technologies also support teachers’ professional development by facilitating the creation of communities of learners (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Technology—in the form of video-based learning, computer-based learning, and the integration of communications technologies—has been shown to be effective in promoting learning and engagement (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Technology and multimedia also engage learners. Brett (2000) studied the impact of the integration of computer-based, interactive, multimedia learning programs on the learners in a Business English program and found that learners were positive about the program. Learners reported increased learning, acquisition of strategies, and motivation for learning. In his research comparing the outcomes of students learning via multimedia with those learning through more traditional means, Brett (1997) found that students in the multimedia condition showed greater comprehension and recall in listening tasks, and benefited from technology’s ability to provide ongoing performance feedback to the learner.

Ross (2015) argues that to truly support English learners in the schools, a two-generation strategy is essential. In order for families to provide important support for achievement from home, they must be provided with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to better support their children and to advocate for their education. Schools can accomplish this two-generation strategy in part by prioritizing family engagement at school and prioritizing English learner training for teachers.

In their Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family School Partnerships, the U.S. Department of Education and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) state that:

If effective cradle-to-career educational partnerships between home and school are to be implemented with fidelity and sustained, engagement initiatives must include a concerted focus on developing adult capacity, whether through pre- and in-service professional development for educators; academies, workshops, seminars, and workplace trainings for families; or as an integrated part of parent-teacher partnership activities. When effectively implemented, such opportunities build and enhance the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of stakeholders to engage in effective partnerships that support student achievement and development and the improvement of schools.

Research and experience point to the need for and positive impact of professional learning efforts. Park and McHugh (2014) looked at research in the field and concluded that, “Those programs that work successfully with diverse parents and families have an explicit parent engagement and outreach strategy that all staff understand and support” (p. 24). Experience with the 4-H program in Oregon led Hobbs (2004) to recognize the importance of additional training for those who work with the population. In a study that looked at changes in student performance in a sample of 71 Title 1 schools, key findings included that students made greater gains, between 20% and 50% higher, in both reading and mathematics when teachers rated their professional development in reading and mathematics at a high level (Westat & Policy Studies Associates, 2001).

Professional learning around family engagement has many benefits. Primary, of course, is that family engagement is a significant factor in student success. Also important, though, are the benefits to teachers themselves. Research suggests that teachers stay in schools where they have positive connections with families and that these higher levels of family engagement correlate with increased job satisfaction for educators (Patton & Wanless, 2013).

This buy-in from school staff is essential. Researchers Wood, Shankland, Jordan, and Pollard (2014) summarized the key features of effective, sustained, district-family partnerships and concluded that, “family engagement initiatives are not going to succeed unless they have buy-in, training, and policy support at the district level” (p. 1).

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stress that *all* adult stakeholders, including school staff, educators, and family members, must develop skills, knowledge, connections, confidence, trust, and expectations to support family engagement efforts.

In developing a framework for effective family engagement, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) conclude that, “in order for family-school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children’s education must learn and grow, just as they support learning and growth among students” (p. 25). **HMH Family Engagement** © 2017 develops educators’ capacity for effective, sustained family engagement with materials and training. The program provides an opportunity for learning that is engaging, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, community-centered, active, practical, and responsive.

From Research to Practice: Effective Strategies for Professional Development and Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners

The **HMH Family Engagement** program is unique, in that the program does not have just one targeted audience—the learner—but, rather, the program seeks to meet the needs of multiple learners—educators in need of professional development to engage more productively in family engagement efforts, EL parents and families who are adult learners, and the Scholars at the center of the program. With **HMH Family Engagement**, educators and families learn together. Materials and resources have been designed to meet the needs of both groups.

The HMH Family Engagement Program

School District Program Components

Professional Development

- ◆ Face-to-face
- ◆ Webinars
- ◆ Online

Print/Digital Materials

- ◆ Program Implementation Guides
 - » Communications Toolkit
- ◆ *Administrator Guides*
- ◆ *Educator Guides*
- ◆ Video
- ◆ Audio
- ◆ **Learn Together Workshops** (in which adult family members, students, and educators collaborate)

Family Program Components

- ◆ *Family Guides* (Accessible English)
- ◆ *Family Guides* (Accessible Spanish)
- ◆ Video
- ◆ Audio
- ◆ HMH School Talk Academic Language Game App
- ◆ **Learn Together Workshops** (in which adult family members, students, and educators collaborate)

In **HMH Family Engagement**, the professional development resources are thoughtfully designed to support educators and families as part of the solution for closing the EL achievement gap.

HMH Family Engagement encourages active, practical learning with tools like the **Action Plan Template** in the Program Implementation Guide, Administrator Guide, and Educator Guide.

HMH Family Engagement ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

School: _____ Teacher: _____ Grades: _____

School Year: _____ Program Leader: _____ Administrator: _____

School Mission Statement: _____ Family Engagement Program Goal: _____

Standard and Goals	Action Items (Choose 1-2)	Activities	Resources Required (People and Funding)	Evaluation and Deadline: <i>How will you know the standard and goals have been met?</i>
<p>STANDARD 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community</p> <p>GOAL 1: Creating a Welcoming Climate</p> <p>GOAL 2: Building a Respectful and Inclusive School Community</p>				

Adapted from PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide by National PTA®. Text copyright © 2009 by National PTA®. Adapted and reprinted by permission of National PTA®.

The key characteristics of effective professional development materials are met through the program’s effective design, content, and delivery.

Best Practices for Effective Adult Learning and Professional Development as Exemplified in <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>	
Recommendations on the Content of Learning	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Effective professional development should seek to transform educators’ practices and mindsets through important, relevant content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> meets the 4 Cs listed in the “Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The content of the program enhances the capacity of participants—educators and families—across four areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Capabilities (skills and knowledge) » Connections (networks) » Cognition (values) » Competence (self-efficacy) ◆ By engaging in culturally sensitive learning, participants in the <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> program will benefit from information that can shift their practices and mindsets to become more supportive and inclusive. For example, in <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>, educators will find low expectations for English learners challenged—and the programs’ professional learning will make them more likely to view English learners and EL families as assets and to hold ELs to high expectations.
Effective professional development should be knowledge-centered and content-based, and include content on student academics, technology, home connections, and other specific strategies to support students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> is designed around the key content that families and teachers need to engage effectively for student success. ◆ The five Learn Together Workshops focus on the content that families and educators need to support student success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Welcome to School » Academic Achievement » Support at Home » Assessment Success » Technology ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> professional development for administrators, educators, and program leaders begins with an initial face-to-face training session titled Learn and Prepare, which is designed to help participants “understand what research says about effective family engagement for English learner families, including best practices and principles.” The second face-to-face training session is Reflect and Plan, where the school staff completes a self-assessment of current family engagement practices and creates specific action plans for effective family engagement going forward. In the Build and Sustain modules, educators have on-going opportunities to apply their learning and implement best practices.

Best Practices for Effective Adult Learning and Professional Development as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendations on the Design of Learning	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
<p>Materials for adult learners should be practical and fill a specific need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> provides ready-made training and resource materials for educators including Program Implementation Guides, Administrator Guides, and Educator Guides that include detailed workshop plans, tools and strategies like checklists and templates, and resources for professional learning. ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement Family Guides</i> provide ready-made resource materials for adult family members. The Family Guides provide hands-on activities for Scholars and their families to do during the Learn Together Workshops. The Family Guides also include activities for families to do after the Workshop, extending the value of the program into the future.
<p>Materials for adult learners should be leveled appropriately and sophisticated enough for adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> materials are written in accessible language for EL families. Language is clear, straightforward, and respectful. Rich graphics are provided to enhance comprehension. Materials are carefully written and designed to appeal to adult learners.
<p>Professional and adult learning opportunities should provide opportunities for reflection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Program Implementation Guide, Administrator Guide, and Educator Guides include multiple reflection tools and templates including a Reflection Journal, a space where educators can record their observations and experiences. ◆ The Family Guides include opportunities for families to record information and reflect on their learning.

Best Practices for Effective Adult Learning and Professional Development as Exemplified in *HMH Family Engagement*

Recommendations on the Delivery of Learning	Example from <i>HMH Family Engagement</i>
Professional learning should be job-embedded and action-oriented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> offers explicit action plans, while the Learn Together Workshops are full of best practices. ◆ Learn Together Workshops include opportunities to Role-Play and develop an Action Plan.
Teachers need collaborative, social support as they explore new practices and techniques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Professional Development Materials provided in the Administrator Guide include Icebreaker activities so that participants can get to know each other and build social trust and support. ◆ Preparation and execution of the Learn Together Workshops is done in teams and small groups with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to foster collaboration and provide support. ◆ Action Plans built into the professional development component are designed to be created and implemented in small groups, teams, and school communities.
Professional and adult learning opportunities should utilize varied forms of technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>HMH Family Engagement</i> includes flexible professional development options for administrators and teachers, including in-person, self-paced/webinar, and blended training sessions.

Conclusion

In **HMH Family Engagement**, every child is a Scholar. And every child can develop the qualities of a successful Scholar. These include that:

1. A Scholar is responsible for his or her learning.
2. A Scholar is curious and eager to learn.
3. A Scholar always does his or her best.
4. A Scholar cooperates and works well with others.
5. A Scholar communicates effectively.

Every Scholar has a team, which includes his or her family and his or her teachers, and this team sets high expectations for the Scholar, and shows confidence in the ability of the Scholar to achieve at these high levels. With the help of **HMH Family Engagement**, teachers and families harness the “incredible power of high expectations” (Teach for America, 2011) as they partner together to share tools and resources and strategies to help scholars develop the qualities needed to be successful in school—and thus, learn more and achieve at higher levels than before.

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