



# The Why, What, and How of Lifting Up Diverse Family Voices in Head Start Programs

*presented by*

**Parent Gauge**<sup>™</sup>

ENGAGE, MEASURE, ACT

with **N H S A**  
NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

**ParentPowered**

creator of **Ready4K**

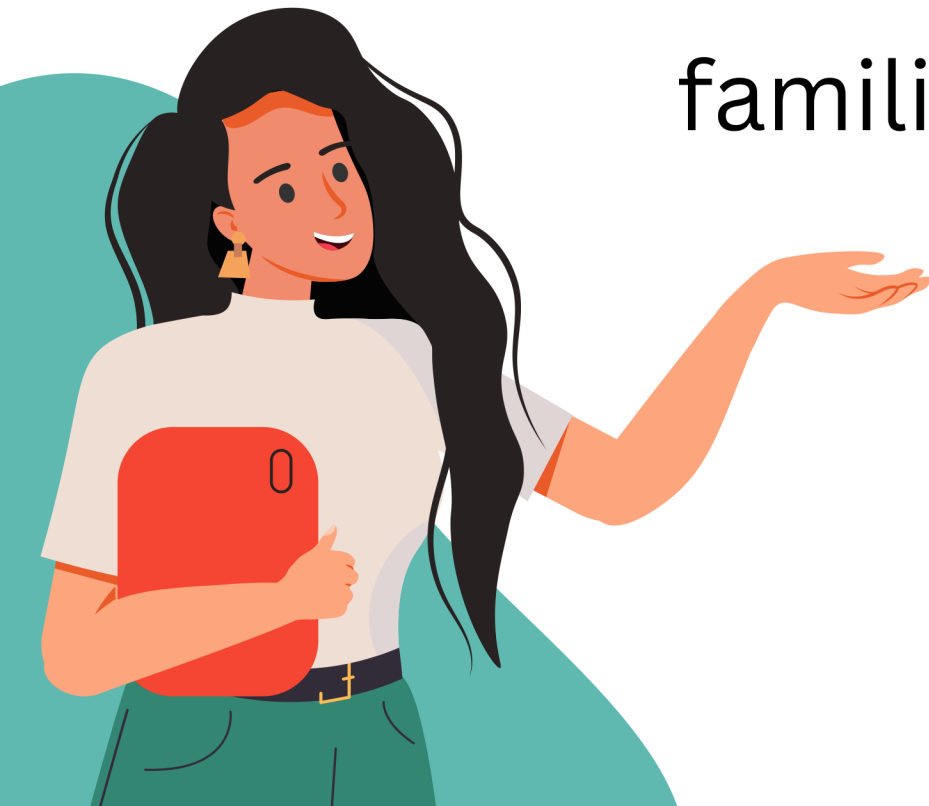
# Getting a Sense of Who's "In the Room"

Type in the chat box!



**Please introduce yourself in the chat!**

1. Your name
2. Your organization
3. Where you are joining from
4. How many years you have been working with children and families



# Introducing Our Speakers



**Sandy Ocegüera**  
Senior Data Product Manager  
NHSA



**Mallery I. Swartz, PhD**  
Senior Director, Learning and Impact  
ParentPowered, PBC

# Learning Objectives



**Family engagement is “everyone’s business.” All program staff have unique and important roles to play in incorporating family voices.**

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Learn about research on family voice and what’s important to families of young children
- Explore research-based ways to lift up family voices
- Reflect on how you might apply these learnings in your work with families

# Agenda



- 1 Context and level-setting
- 2 Research on **why** incorporating family voice is important
- 3 Understand **what** is important to parents of young children
- 4 Explore **how** program staff can advocate for the inclusion of family voice in their programs
- 5 Conclusion and wrap-up



# CONTEXT AND LEVEL-SETTING

# Connections to Head Start Program Performance Standards



“ Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that **address prevalent needs of families across their program** that may leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

- 1302.50 Family engagement

”

“ A program must offer individualized family partnership services that **collaborate with families** to identify interests, needs, and aspirations related to the family engagement outcomes.

- 1302.52 Family partnership services

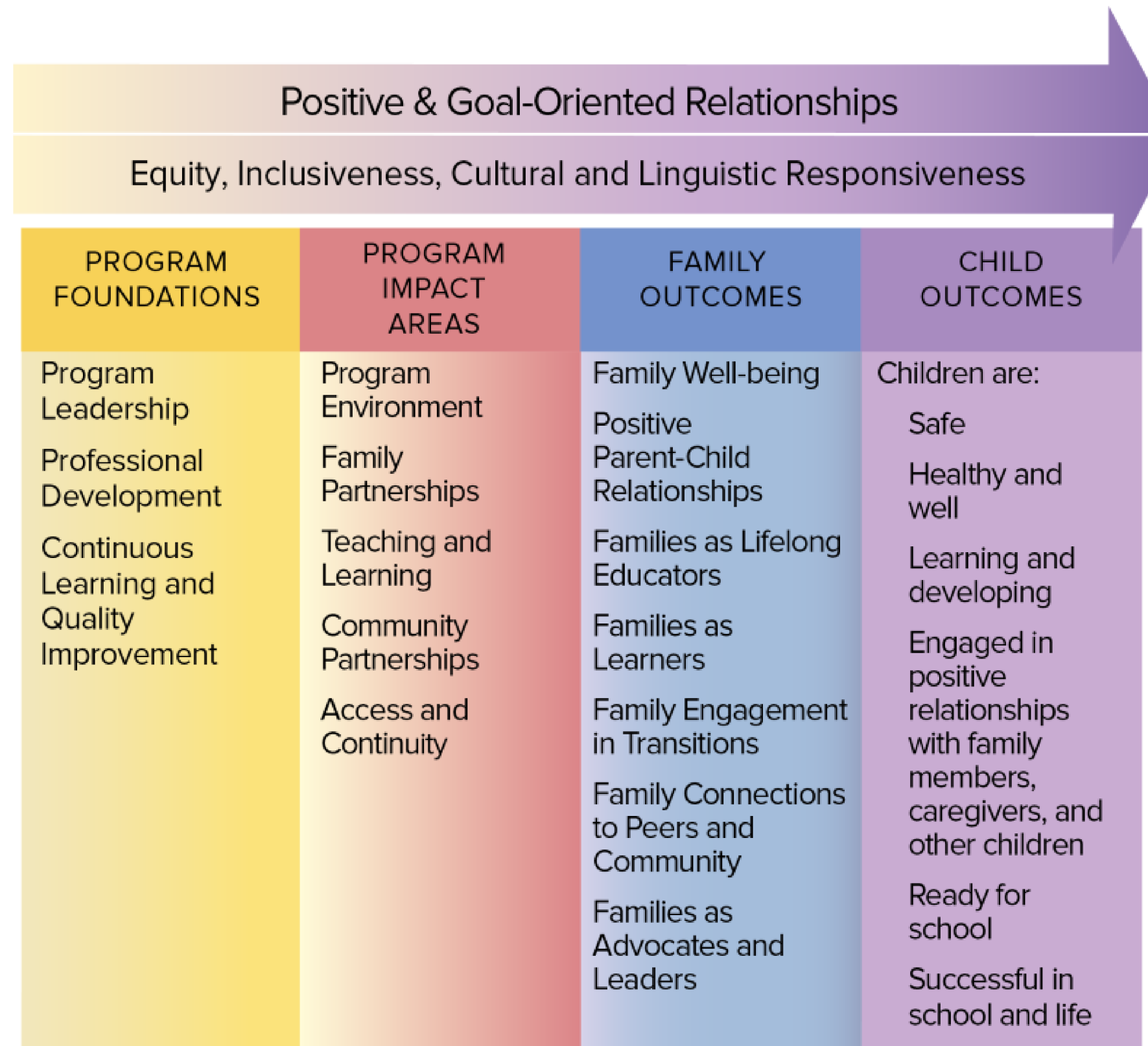
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“ Programs must structure education and child development services to **recognize parents' roles as children's lifelong educators**, and to encourage parents to engage in their child's education.

- 1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services

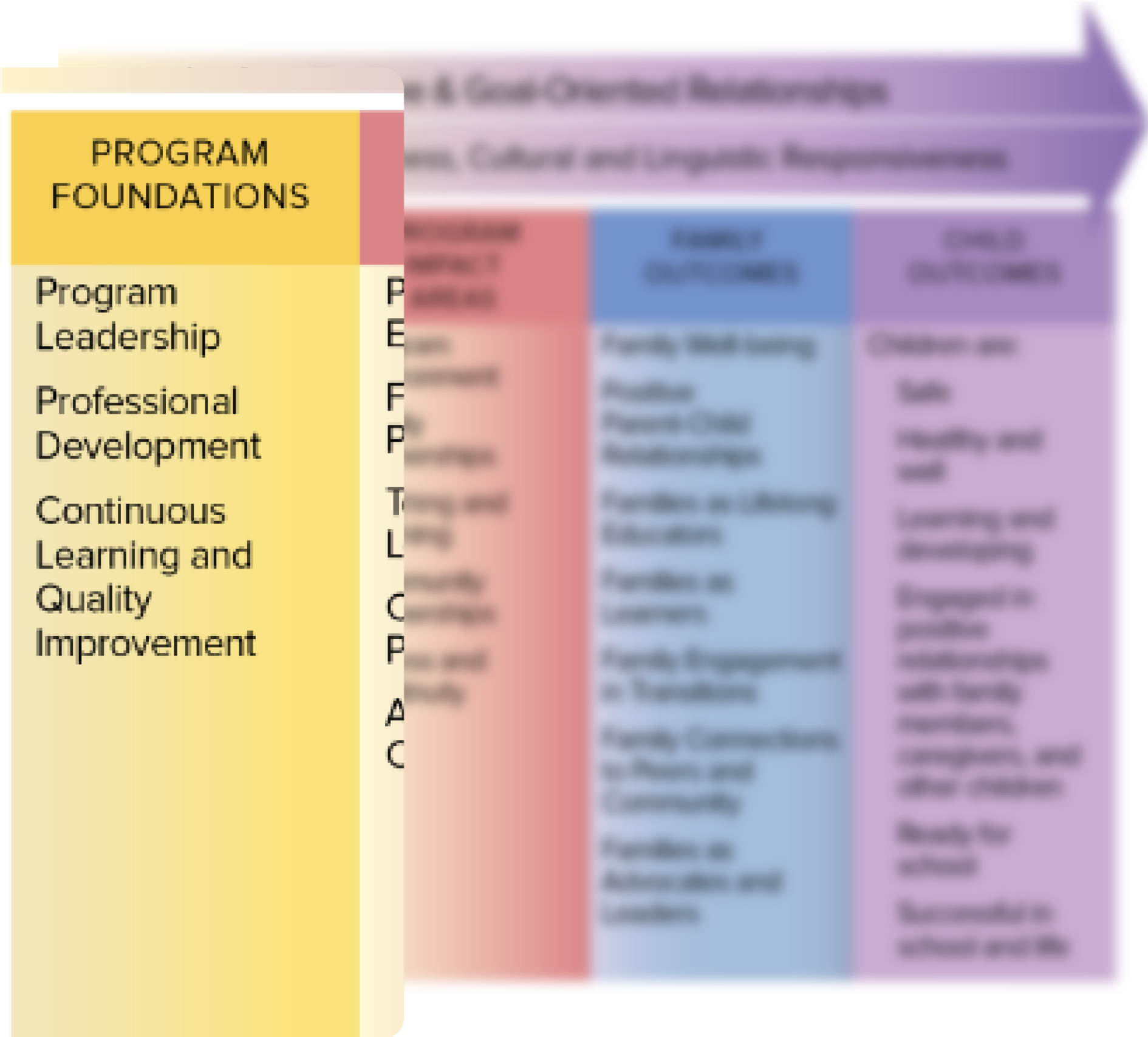
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# Connections to PFCE Framework

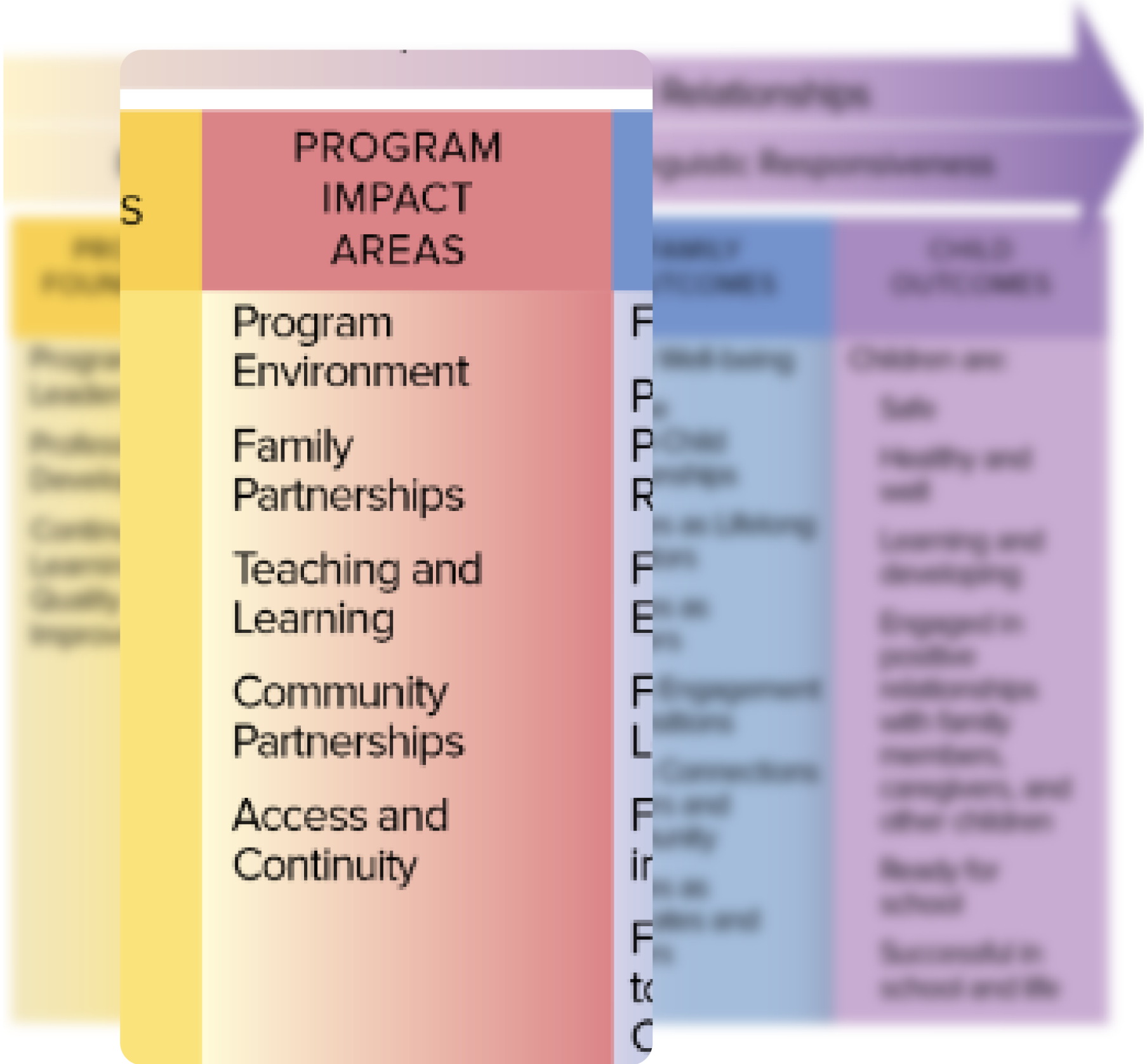




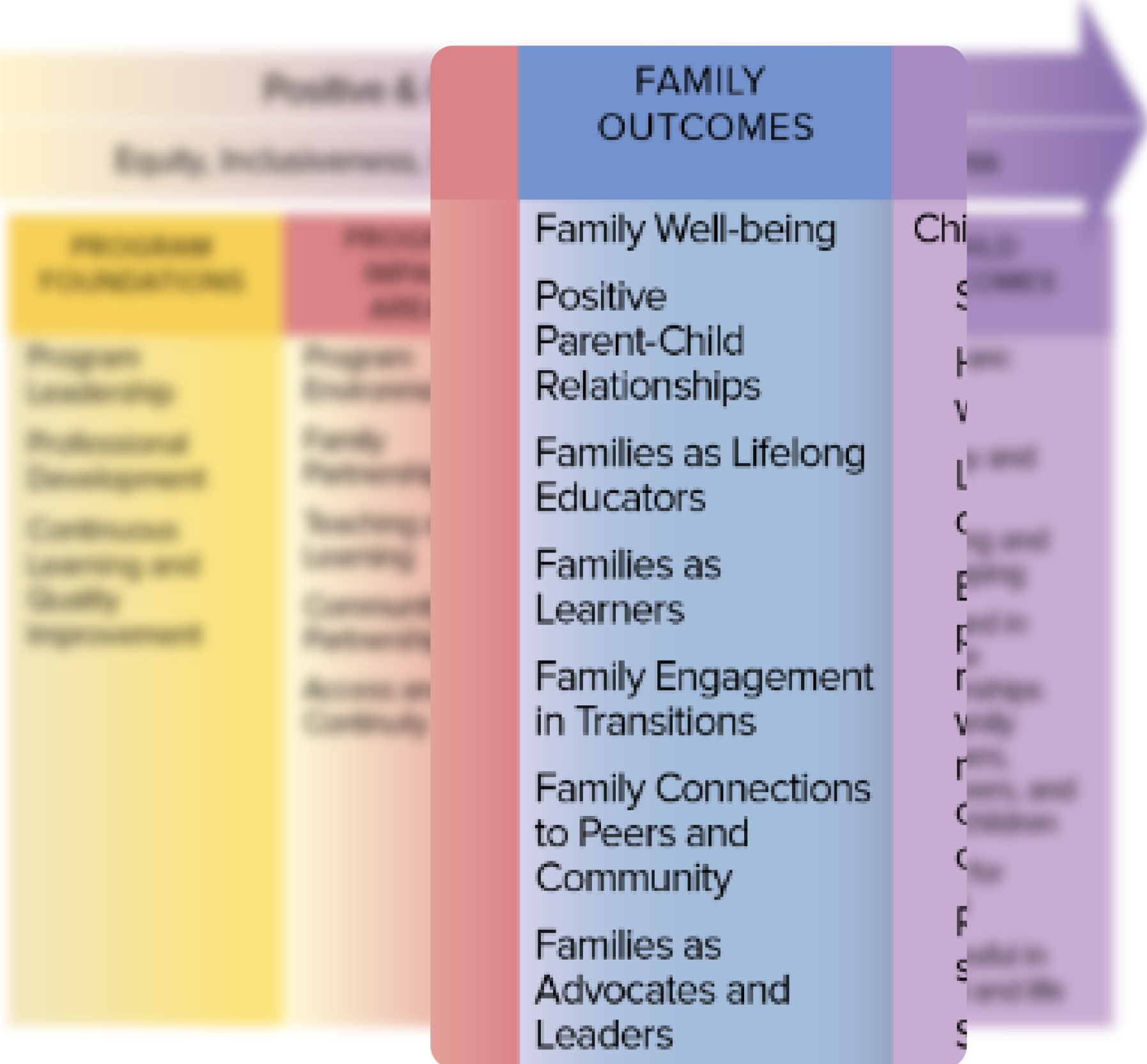
# Connections to PFCE Framework



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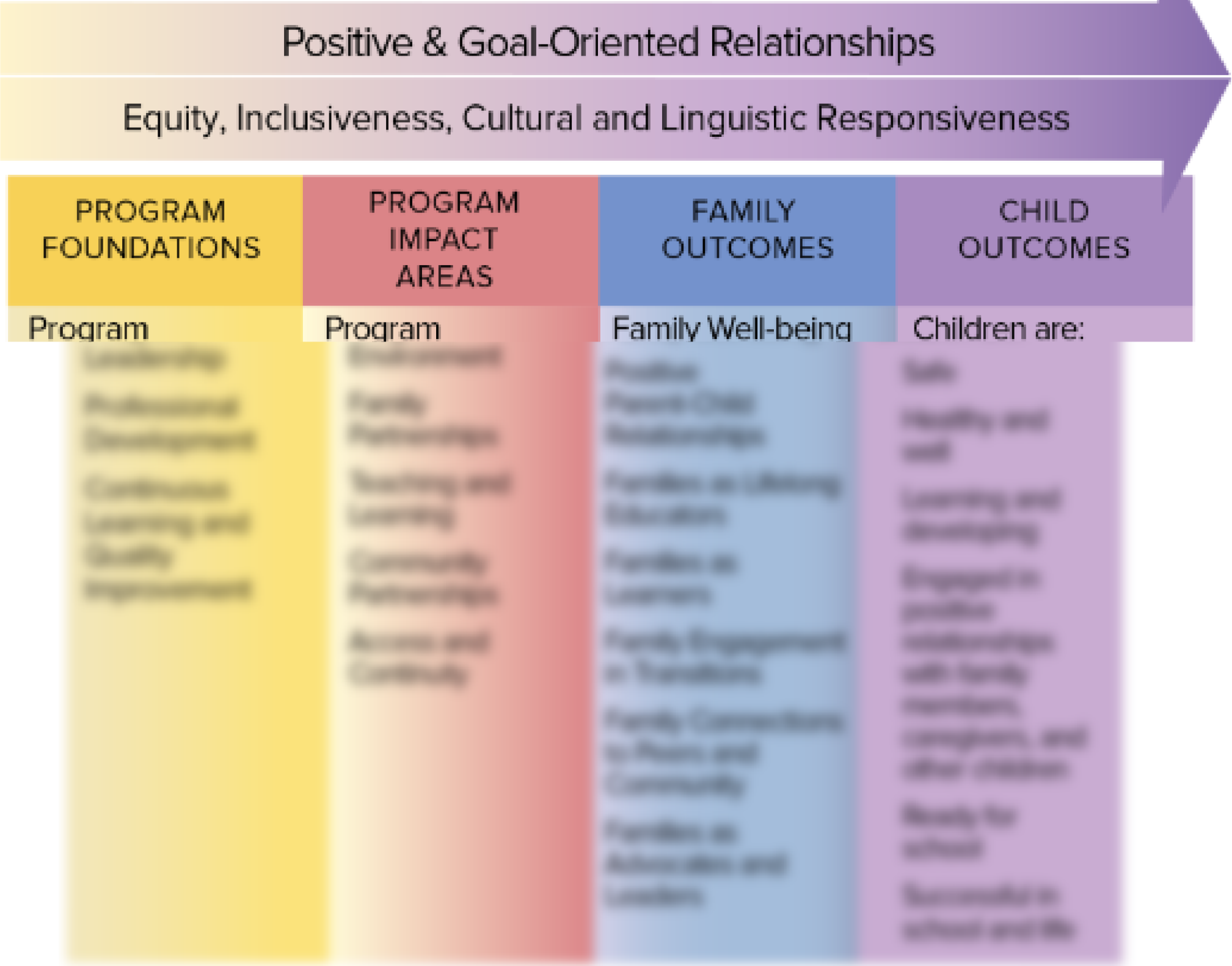
# Connections to PFCE Framework



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# Connections to PFCE Framework



# Strengths-Based Attitudes

- All families have strengths.
- Families are the first and most important teachers of their children.
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their child's development.
- Families have expertise about their child and their family.
- Families' contributions are important and valuable.



Free Resource! Link in chat:  
**"Strategies for Family Engagement:  
Attitudes and Practices"**  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>



# Trusting and Meaningful Parent-Provider Relationships



## Parent-Provider Relationships: What We Know

Current exemplary practice in quality parent-provider relationships for early care and education suggests that relationships are more successful when providers:

- Show respect for families and their caregiving practices
- Are committed and caring
- Demonstrate openness to change
- Take the time and energy to understand the family's community and cultural context

Research about quality provider-parent relationships shows that certain strategies are effective with families, including the following:

- Communicating clearly, consistently, and frequently
- Collaborating with families rather than telling them what to do
- Responding to each family's wishes and needs
- Focusing on the whole family
- Helping the family identify and connect to additional resources

*Adapted from Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) Project 2010-2015  
(see references section for additional citations)*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

# Defining Family Voice

Type in the chat box!



Family well-being  
**Accessibility** Strengths  
Systems change  
Shared knowledge Reciprocal  
Empowerment **Leadership**  
**Capacity building**  
**Shared decision-making**  
Insights  
**Advancing equity**  
Lived experiences  
**Trust** Opportunity to share needs and wants  
Collective impact  
Representation **Relationships**





# An Example from the Home Visiting Field



## MICHIGAN'S PARENT VOICE AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUUM

*How Parent Leaders Become Change Agents to Impact Decisions*

INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT	EMPOWERMENT	LEADERSHIP
Parents are enrolled and participate	Parent voice informs	Parent partners collaborate in planning and implementation	Parent leaders are integral decision-makers
The system designs all policies, programs and evaluation tools for parent participants	The system learns from parent voice through surveys, focus groups and interviews	The system changes approach with parent partners	The system designs policies, programs and evaluation tools with parent leaders

Stark, D. R. (2020). *Stepping Up and Speaking Out: The Evolution of Parent Leadership in Michigan*. Lansing, MI: Early Childhood Investment Corporation & Michigan Home Visiting Initiative.

Full report here:

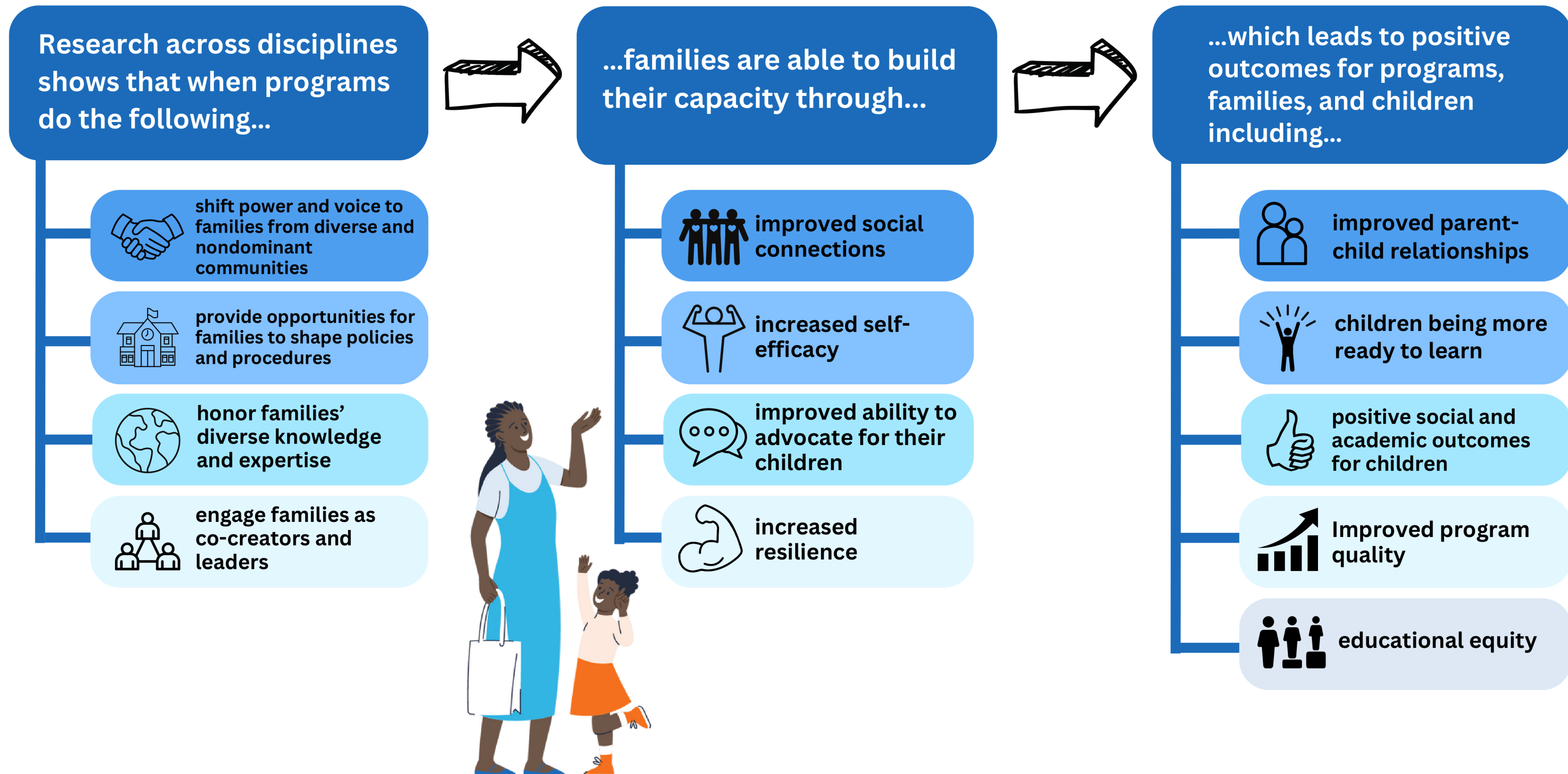
<https://ecic4kids.org/stepping-up/>





# THE "WHY"

# Research on the Importance of Family Voice





# THE "WHAT"

# Family Voices from Early Childhood Research

Children's development:

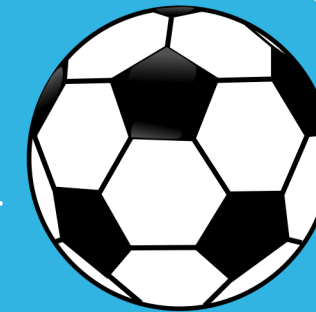
- Health and safety
- Social-emotional development
- Language development
- Early brain development



Ensuring that their children are loved



Access to extracurricular activities



Information on effective parenting



School attendance



Academic outcomes



Food security



Parental self-care/emotion regulation



Family finances and economic mobility



# Ready4K Family Voices

- Language development and communication
- Social-emotional development
- Parental self-care and self-regulation
- Understanding their child's development
- Access to community resources
- Strengthening the parent-child relationship
- Supporting their child's development through daily routines

“As parents, it's helpful to see that **we are not alone** and there is always someone you can talk to.



I appreciate the ideas on helping get through **difficult behaviors and on child development.**”



“**My child feels more noticed at home,** more grown up in that he can have responsibilities like mom and dad, and more important in the roles he is learning.



”I appreciate the reminders to **slow down and take care of myself** - and to enjoy my kids and where they are now.



# Parent Gauge™ Family Voices

ENGAGE, MEASURE, ACT

- Community
- Social connections
- Welcoming environments
- Parent/Provider relationship
- Feeling empowered as a parent
- Avenue and opportunity to share opinions
- Quality of education

“ I have a **good relationship with teaching staff**. They allow me to participate in the education of my child.



” The program has provided my child and me the **opportunity to interact more with each other**. Participating in the family workshops and parent and child activities was a unique experience.

“ Head Start has helped by giving us other ideas/options on projects to do with the kids. They are a **good source for fun activities and resources** if needed.



” Staff is so personal and caring. Bringing love and positivity to everyone and children around them.

# — Reflecting on the What

Type in the  
chat box!



What's important to the  
families in your program?







# THE "HOW"

# Relationship-Based Practices to Support Family Leadership and Advocacy

## CORE KNOWLEDGE

- Understand the importance of collaborative problem-solving with parents.
- Recognize parents' advocacy and leadership experience and be aware of additional opportunities.
- Understand potential barriers to parents being able to engage in advocacy efforts.



“Positive relationships—based on an understanding of the hopes, dreams, values, customs, and beliefs of each family—are the foundation of program-family partnerships and support family well-being.”



## KEY SKILLS

- Include families in decision-making and evaluating change in the program.
- Support parents' ideas, confidence, and skill development as advocates and leaders.
- Encourage parents to work with other parents to advance program-, community- and state-level changes.



## Free Resources! Links in chat:

1 "Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement" from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/>

2 "Families as Advocates and Leaders" from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

# Relationship-Based Practices to Support Family Leadership and Advocacy

## EXAMPLES OF KEY PRACTICES

- Work with parents to plan how to advocate for their children and families.
- Encourage families to volunteer in the program and community.
- Partner with families to identify opportunities that promote parent leadership and welcome parent input.



Free Resource! Link in chat:  
**"Introduction to the Family Services Role"**

[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov)



# NCPFCE: Co-Design with Families

## Parent Recommendations for Successful Co-Design

1. Begin with Foundational Reflections
2. Shift Staff Mindsets & Beliefs
3. Recognize and Compensate Parents
4. Bring Parents in from the Start
5. Set Up Ways of Being Together
6. Create a Welcoming Space
7. Ask Questions with Purpose
8. Listen



Free Resource! Link in chat:  
"Parent Tips for Effective Family  
Engagement"  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

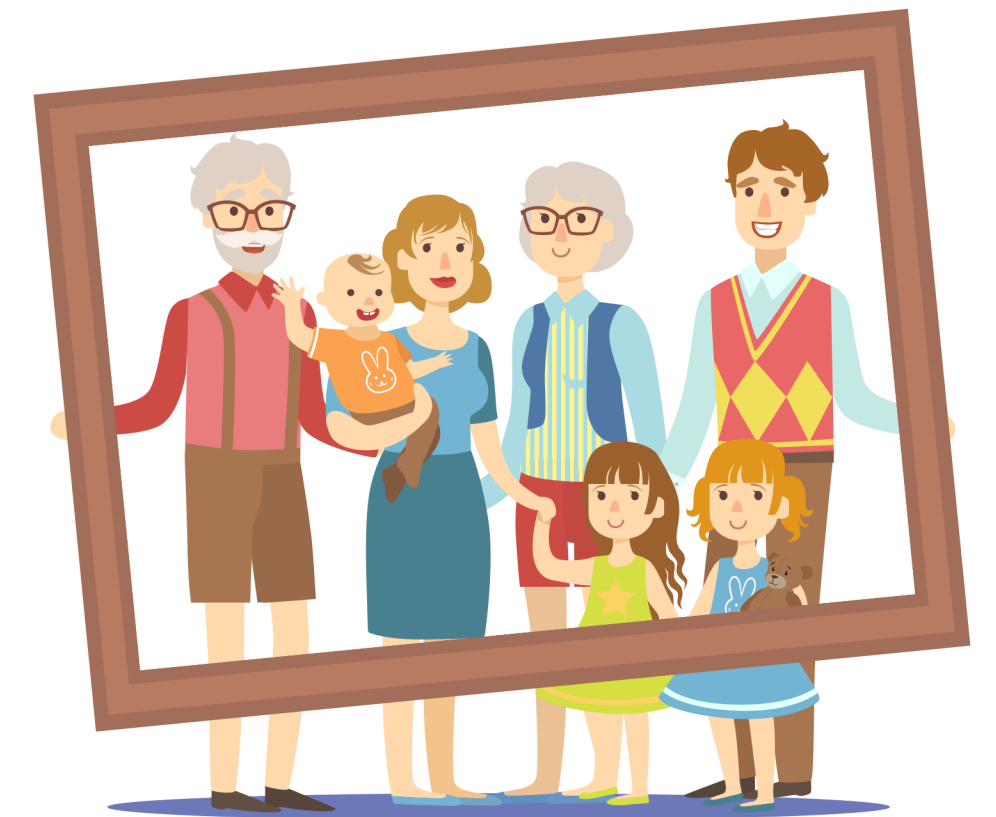




# Other Ideas and Resources

## Recasting Families and Communities as Co-Designers

1. Involve families and communities as co-designers of their own futures.
2. Engage multiple identities and perspectives in interactions and relationships.
3. Sustain reflexive and iterative learning processes over time.
4. Engage current and ongoing tension points.
5. Imagine and enact change.



Ishimaru, A.M., Bang, M., Valladares, M.R., Nolan, C.M., Tavares, H., Rajendran, A., Chang, K. (2019). *Recasting Families and Communities as Co-Designers of Education in Tumultuous Times*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved 7/11/23 from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/family-leadership>.

Resource here:

[nepc.colorado.edu](http://nepc.colorado.edu)



R4K

# Product Development and CQI



**Ready4K**

## Ready4K Approach

- Accessible
- Strengths-Based
- Easy to participate in

## Examples:

- Listening sessions
- Quarterly surveys
- Partner meetings
- Local/community resource curation

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## Parent Gauge Approach

- Universal
- Inclusive
- Adaptive

## Examples:

- Head Start families inclusion in pilot program
- Open responses from families
- Focus groups

# Reflecting on the How

Type in the chat box!



What other approaches or strategies do you use to elevate the voices of families in your work?





# CONCLUSION AND WRAP-UP



# Looking Ahead

## "Research Based Family Engagement: Parent Gauge & Ready4K"

Date: October 4, 2023

Time: 4:00 pm ET

Presenters:



**Sandy Oceguela**

Senior Data Product Manager  
NHSA



**Weezie Hough**

Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships  
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# Q & A SESSION

# Contact Information



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## Ready4K

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## Online

[learn.ready4k.com/parent-gauge-ready4k](https://learn.ready4k.com/parent-gauge-ready4k)

