

# Twenty Steps to a Full Partnership with Parents

## Pre-Enrollment

1. **Pre-Enrollment Information on the Program:** written in welcoming language, it describes the program and defines quality.
2. **Parent-Child Tour:** each parent (and child, if present) is individually and warmly welcomed and introduced to the program by the director and staff.

## Enrollment

3. **Family Intake:** a mutual exchange of information and expectations, this is the parents' chance to share, in detail, what they believe and what they wish to see for their child. This also includes a no-surprises discussion of real-world issues that the parent may encounter: teacher turnover, biting, and other ups and downs. Include these important components:
  - Introductions to all key people, including the primary caregiver, center leadership, and homebase teachers.
  - Parents complete the family-child enrollment information and discuss their expectations and concerns.
  - Parents receive and discuss the family partnership agreement and receive an informational copy of the preschool partnership agreement, which they will sign when the child enters preschool.
  - Schedule the prior to first day visit.
4. **Family Partnership Agreement:** the family partnership agreement expresses the expectations of the center, the parents, and the children and represents a commitment to work together.
5. **Parent Handbook:** parents receive the center's all-you-need-to-know handbook, which is written in a friendly, positive style.
6. **Primary Caregiver:** a primary caregiver is assigned to all children through preschool age. The primary caregiver plays the role of child and family advocate, communicator, monitor, evaluator of child and family experiences, caregiver, and teacher. This is in contrast to the hen-and-chick model.

## The First Six Weeks

7. **What to Write in the First-Day Note:** this is a pre-start, one-page note with reminders of the sign-in procedure, a list of the names of the staff who will be present, where to put the child's car seat and coat, and any information that will help parents feel more knowledgeable on their child's first day. This note is

designed to put parents at ease because they see that staff are ready and excited about their arrival. It also helps remind staff to complete any last-minute details in preparation for the big day.

8. **First-Day Preparations:** new children and their families are welcomed by signs, labeled cubbies and cribs/cots, child-and-parent photos, labeled portfolios, and lobby and room greetings. Families will find their names on the sign-in materials.
9. **First-Day Note /Fax /E-mail:** this is a reassuring and empathetic communication from the primary caregiver to the parent at work on the child's first day; it communicates the message "Congratulations, your child made it through the first day, and so did you!"
10. **Child Portfolio:** the child portfolio begins on the child's first day, and continues throughout the child's experience in the program.
11. **Daily Information:** the child's experiences are communicated daily to all parents through daily experience sheets or daily journals.
12. **Director's Note after Three Weeks or at the One-Month Anniversary:** a handwritten note to the new family states: "How is it going? We are glad to have you, and please drop in if you have questions or concerns."
13. **Six-Week Questionnaire for New Families:** New Family's Satisfaction: this query, given after six weeks, solicits parents' feelings about their experiences thus far.

### Ongoing

14. **Parent Partnership Group (Parent Advisory Group):** the key function of the parent partnership group is to systematically solicit parents' ideas, concerns, questions, and appreciations of program staff.
15. **Random Acts of Care and Kindness:** these include unexpected phone calls, notes, and gestures that indicate caring about the family (for example, a call to a parent who is staying home with a sick child).
16. **Parents' Prime Times:** informal homebase activities for parents two to four times a year, such as coffee hours, lunches with staff, or potluck suppers.
17. **The Family Conference:** a conference that focuses on the child's, parent's, and family's (if there are siblings) experiences in the program and on the child's accomplishments. Standing offers for conferences are made frequently, and a formal offer is made at least twice a year. Older preschool, kindergarten, and school-age children may participate in some of the conference.
18. **Room Departure Questionnaire:** a homebase departure questionnaire is given to parents when their child makes a transition to a new homebase.
19. **Preschool Partnership Agreement for Success in School and Life:** this is signed by parents, homebase teacher, and child upon entering preschool.
20. **Parent Satisfaction:** create and take an annual survey of parents.