

**THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE HIGH FIVE MODEL
FOR HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY



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The Science Behind the High Five Model for High-Quality Early Childhood Education
An Annotated Bibliography

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The Coalition for the Psychology of Schools in Education presents this annotated bibliography to support the High Five Model of High-Quality Early Childhood Education. The annotated bibliography contains information and resources for parents, caregivers, and professionals about factors that enhance the likelihood of successful growth and development during the early childhood years. The Coalition searched the literature for the annotated bibliography using the following databases: PsycINFO, ERIC, Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier, and Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.

1. What is happening in the classroom?

- Do children seem to be engaged and to enjoy what they are doing?
- Are there activities available that would interest your child?
- Do children have any choice about what they do during the day?
- Are the routines flexible so they meet the needs of individual children?
- Does the classroom environment accommodate your child's special needs?

Early, D. M., Iruka, I. U., Ritchie, S., Barbarin, O. A., Winn, D. C., Crawford, G. M., & ...Pianta, R. C. (2010). How do pre-kindergarteners spend their time? Gender, ethnicity, and income as predictors of experiences in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 177-193. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.10.003

To determine how pre-kindergarten children spend their time throughout the day, the researchers observed 2,061 children in 652 pre-kindergarten programs. Results indicated that the pre-kindergarten day was roughly equally divided among free choice, teacher-assigned activities, and meals/routines. Children spent much of their time in language/literacy, social studies, and art, and less time in math and gross motor activities. Much of the pre-k day (44%) was spent in 'no coded learning activity' such as walking aimlessly or waiting in line during a transitional period. When added to results from other studies, this work demonstrates that children in preschool spend much of their time unoccupied at preschool. Although it can be argued that non-engagement times can teach children patience that they will need as they grow and develop, the researchers recommended that teachers utilize down time more efficiently, such as having conversations or singing songs with children.

Fuligni, A. S., Howes, C., Huangb, Y., Hongb, S. S., & Lara-Cinisomoc, S. (2012). Activity settings and daily routines in preschool classrooms: Diverse experiences in early learning settings for low-income children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*, 198– 209.

Highly trained research assistants spent two days in classrooms of 3-4-year-old children from families of lower income in different types of programs, and coded the activities and interactions using multiple instruments. They reported two distinct patterns of daily routines. One was labeled High-Free Choice to describe classrooms that allowed children to select the activity of their choice during the majority of the day. These classrooms had less teacher-directed time in small or large groups. The other pattern was labeled Structured-Balanced. In these classrooms, children spent approximately equal amounts of time in teacher-directed small and large group activities and in free choice child-directed activities. No classrooms had all or mostly small- or large-group teacher-directed activity. The High-Free Choice classrooms tended to give children more opportunities for fantasy or pretend play and gross motor activity. On the other hand, the Structured-Balanced Classrooms tended to provide more math, language and literacy, and art activities. This resulted in children in Structured-Balanced Classrooms having significantly higher vocabulary scores than children in the High-Free Choice classrooms; however, there were no significant differences between these two types of programs' impact on children's math reasoning or social-emotional behaviors. The authors

concluded that children in Structured-Balanced Classrooms received more teacher-scaffolded interactions (i.e., the teachers ask questions and extend or add to what the children say).

Vitiello, V. E., Booren, L. M., Downer, J. T., & Williford, A. P. (2012). Variation in children's classroom engagement throughout a day in preschool: Relations to classroom and child factors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*, 210-220. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.08.005

Researchers observed 283 preschool children in 84 preschool classrooms to determine associations among children's engagement with (1) peers, teachers, and tasks, (2) classroom activity settings (e.g., outdoor time), and (3) personal factors associated with the children (e.g., age). The results revealed that engagement can vary among tasks and throughout the school day. A child can, for example, be more positively engaged with peers and tasks during child-directed activities than teacher-directed activities, although during child-directed activities, children were less engaged with their teachers as compared to during teacher-directed activities. Children's engagement decreased during the course of the day. Transition periods were found to be difficult for children as they were less engaged with their teachers and tasks. Positive peer engagement was also found during meal time. Finally, there were no gender differences regarding engagement, and positive peer and task engagement were found to increase with children's age. The results showed that children had different opportunities for engagement with peers, tasks, and teachers when children were involved with different activity settings.

Kemp, C., Kishida, Y., Carter, M., & Sweller, N. (2013). The effect of activity type on the engagement and interaction of young children with disabilities in inclusive childcare settings. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28*, 134-143. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2012.03.003

In this study, 37 children with mild to severe disabilities were observed in preschool settings. The children's disabilities varied, ranging from autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and cerebral palsy to global developmental delays. The severity and scope of disability affected children's activities that were not child-directed. A second finding was that peer interaction was higher during child-directed free play than during group or meal-routine activities. Compared to children without ASD, however, children with ASD showed lower levels of engagement and peer interaction during free play. Differences were not found in adult interactions with children with or without ASD. An encouraging outcome from the study was the high percentage of engagement that was found for the free play and meal-routine activities. This indicated that for these activity types, there were many opportunities for children with a range of disabilities, including significant intellectual disabilities and autism, to engage and, therefore, to learn in inclusive childcare settings.

2. How are teachers and children getting along?

- Do children treat each other with respect?
- Do teachers encourage children to work and play together in a positive way?
- Do teachers and children appear to enjoy one another?
- Do teachers treat all children with kindness, respect, and warmth?
- Do teachers speak to one another in respectful ways?

Teacher-Child Relationships

Palermo, F., Hanish, L. D., Martin, C. L., Fabes, R. A., & Reiser, M. (2007). Preschoolers' academic readiness: What role does the teacher-child relationship play? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 22*, 407-422.

This study examined the role of teacher-child relationship quality (i.e., close, dependent, or conflictive) on children's academic readiness for kindergarten in an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse sample of 95 preschoolers. Close teacher-child relationships were associated with greater academic readiness, as well as by increases in child prosocial behavior and decreased peer group exclusion. Findings suggest that teacher training, education, and support for establishing close teacher-child relationships may optimize preschoolers' academic readiness by promoting positive child social behaviors.

Schmitt, M. B., Pentimonti, J. M., & Justice, L. M. (2012). Teacher-child relationships, behavior regulation, and language gain among at-risk preschoolers. *Journal of School Psychology, 50*, 681-699.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teacher-child relationship quality and children's behavior regulation within preschool classrooms were associated with improved grammar for 173 preschoolers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A positive link was found between close teacher-child relationships and preschoolers' grammar over the course of a school year. Nurturing classroom environments and strong behavior regulation abilities may assist language development among preschoolers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Howes, C., Wishard Guerra, A., Fuligni, A., Zucker, E., Lee, L., Obregon, N. B., & Spivak, A. (2011). Classroom dimensions predict early peer interaction when children are diverse in ethnicity, race, and home language. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*(4), 399-408. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.02.004

The aim of the study was to use dimensions of classroom quality and the quality of teacher-child relationships to predict preschool children's behavior with peers across race, ethnicity and home language. Classroom climate and teacher-child relationships during the preschool years contributed to children's behavior with peers over and above the contribution made by gender, race, ethnic and racial background, and language competence. Teachers who form close relationships with children who are not from their cultural community can provide support for

those children exploring and developing peer social skills. Findings from the study demonstrated that classroom quality and the nature of teacher-child relationships predict preschool children's behavior with peers.

Staff-Staff Relationships

Curby, T. W., Boyer, C., Edwards, T., & Chavez, C. (2012). Assistant teachers in Head Start classrooms: Comparing to and working with lead teachers. *Early Education & Development, 23(5)*, 640-653. doi:10.1080/10409289.2011.607361

In this study, 14 pairs of lead teachers and assistant teachers in Head Start classrooms were observed during typical classroom activities. Instances of teachers providing emotional support, classroom organization support, or instructional support were recorded. Results indicated that earlier actions by either the lead or assistant were related to later actions taken by the other (e.g., the lead teacher providing instructional support, followed by the assistant teacher providing instructional support). This suggests that judgments of classroom quality should include consideration of the actions taken by both the lead teacher and the assistant teacher as well as the quality of the coordination of the two.

Shim, J., Hestenes, L., & Cassidy, D. (2004). Teacher structure and child care quality in preschool classrooms. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 19(2)*, 143-157. doi:10.1080/02568540409595061

This study examined the relationship between the structure of teacher teams and the quality of child care provided by these teams. Seventy-two early childhood teachers from 44 different sites were included in the study. Teacher structure was noted as either 1) teaching alone, 2) hierarchical teaching (i.e., lead teacher and assistant teacher), or 3) co-teaching (i.e., collaborative, non-hierarchical structure to classroom responsibilities). Results indicate that on both global measures of overall childcare quality (including, for example, quality of the physical space, materials available to children, activities engaged in, etc.) as well as measures of teacher-child interaction quality, childcare quality and teacher-child interactions scores were higher when two teachers (vs. just one) were present in the classroom. Further, the co-teaching structure was related to higher scores on some indicators of child-care quality (e.g., quality of activities conducted and materials provided) than was the hierarchical teaching structure.

Child-Child Relationships

Acar, I. H., Rudasill, K., Molfese, V. J., Torquati, J. C., & Prokasky, A. (2015). Temperament and preschool children's peer interactions. *Early Education and Development, 26(4)*, 479-495. doi:10.1080/10409289.2015.1000718

This article examines the relationship between preschool children's temperament and interactions with peers, with temperament based on parental reports of children's shyness,

inhibitory control, and attentional focusing. Positive self-regulation and lack of perceived oversensitivity is predictive of positive peer relationships and friendship selection among preschool children. Positive peer relationships are essential for navigating the school environment and healthy development. The results of this study suggest that supporting young children's ability to pay attention may lead to more positive peer relationships, particularly for children who exhibit very high or low degrees of shyness. Acar and colleagues suggest that the results of this study can be used to help teachers guide young children's peer interactions by supporting differences in their temperaments. For example, shy students and their outgoing counterparts can practice facilitated communication to support their individual differences.

Bulotsky-Shearer, R. J., Bell, E. R., Romero, S. L., & Carter, T. M. (2014). Identifying mechanisms through which preschool problem behavior influences academic outcomes: What is the mediating role of negative peer play interactions? *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 22(4)*, 199-213. doi:10.1177/1063426613484806

The findings of this study suggest that internalizing behavior such as sadness and anxiety is expressed in the medium of peer play, and may impact early learning skills, particularly for girls. The authors suggest that findings from this research can be used to guide teacher's instructional practices. Teachers use of techniques, such as scaffolding conversations and play between peers may have a positive effect on the quality of learning experiences for children. Difficulties in peer play is only one medium in which problem behaviors can influence academic skills, and the authors propose that future research address other child-level variables.

Clopet, T., & Bulotsky-Shearer, R. J. (2016). A comprehensive look at peer social competence in preschool. *NHSA Dialog, 18(3)*, 72-77.

The authors found that positive interactions with peers were related to gains in language and literacy. Negative engagements with peers were related to poorer mathematics skills and alphabet knowledge. The findings provide support for teacher's use of play to promote prosocial behavior within this age group. The authors suggest that it is important to employ evaluation of peer social competence that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Coplan, R. J., Bullock, A., Archbell, K. A., & Bosacki, S. (2015). Preschool teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and emotional reactions to young children's peer group behaviors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 30(Part A)*, 117-127. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.09.005

Preschool teachers play an important role in helping children to navigate and adapt to the school environment. The present study examined preschool teachers' attitudes, beliefs and negative emotions toward young children's peer group behaviors. The authors found that overall teachers understood what constituted problematic behavior and how those behaviors could affect academic outcomes for children. Coplan and colleagues suggested that teachers having a clear understanding of children's emotional behaviors and familiarity with 'early warning signs' of social withdrawal and aggression can help to prevent long-term academic problems for young children.

Eggum-Wilkens, N. D., Fabes, R. A., Castle, S., Zhang, L., Hanish, L. D., & Martin, C. L. (2014). Playing with others: Head start children's peer play and relations with kindergarten school competence. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29(3)*, 345-356. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.04.008

Early academic, behavioral, and social emotional functioning provide the foundation for future school success. Peer engagement has been shown to be critical to academic achievement. The authors observed the peer play of children attending Head Start over the course of 1 year and then examined how individual differences within play predicted school success at the end of kindergarten. The findings suggested that positive peer engagements may lead to easier transitions into kindergarten, and peer play may also help children to adapt to formal school settings. The study does not provide information as to whether children received more than one year of Head Start, nor does it address the role of parenting as preparation for school competence. Both factors have been shown to influence positive school outcomes for young children.

Sallquist, J., DiDonato, M. D., Hanish, L. D., Martin, C. L., & Fabes, R. A. (2012). The importance of mutual positive expressivity in social adjustment: Understanding the role of peers and gender. *Emotion, 12(2)*, 304-313. doi:10.1037/a0025238

Positive emotions have the tendency to elicit positive responses, and children prefer to be with others who demonstrate high levels of positive emotions. The findings of this study suggest that, regardless of gender, mutual positive emotions positively predicted positive adjustment and negative emotions predicted negative adjustment. We do not yet know exactly what are the mechanisms that contribute to individuals' positive emotions and how they might contribute to social adjustment and serve as a protective factor against adversity.

Timler, G. R., Olswang, L. B., & Coggins, T. E. (2005). Social communication interventions for preschoolers: Targeting peer interactions during peer group entry and cooperative play. *Seminars in Speech and Language, 26(3)*, 170-180. doi:10.1055/s-2005-917122

This article describes assessment and intervention techniques that can be used to enhance preschool children's social communication skills during cooperative play. The paper outlines guidelines for social communication and for identifying children with language impairments, pinpointing appropriate targets and situations for intervention. Timler and colleagues concluded that effective interventions provide the opportunity to practice positive behaviors in the classroom. Cooperative play offers young children the chance to develop friendships, to learn to solve problems, and to learn to compromise. Another important skill children learn through cooperative play is how to enter into play with peers. This is acquired through practice, and by children understanding how to communicate and to engage in a group setting.

3. How do teachers guide and, when needed, redirect children's behavior?

- Is it clear how children are expected to behave?
- Do teachers appreciate children's positive behavior?
- Do teachers step in early when they see a child beginning to struggle?
- Do teachers guide and redirect children when they struggle?
- Do teachers help children to solve their problems?

Bailey, C. S., Denham, S. A., Curby, T. W., & Bassett, H. H. (2016). Emotional and organizational supports for preschoolers' emotion regulation: Relations with school adjustment. *Emotion, 16*, 263-279.

This article reports findings from a study of 312 3-5-year-old children and their 44 preschool teachers regarding ways that teachers can support children in developing emotion regulation and executive control in the classroom. Results indicated that children with lower levels of emotion regulation who were in classrooms where teachers did not provide emotional support and guidance were at the greatest risk for low positive engagement with classroom activities. Thus, findings provide support for the notion that teachers' supports (e.g., demonstrating warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness towards children) can be particularly helpful for children struggling to regulate their emotions in the preschool setting.

Pianta, R. C., Barnett, W. S., Burchinal, M., & Thornburg, K. R. (2009). The effects of preschool education: What we know, how public policy is or is not aligned with the evidence base, and what we need to know. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 10*, 49-88.

Effective teaching in early childhood settings requires skillful combinations of explicit instruction, sensitive and warm interactions, responsive feedback, and verbal engagement that is intentionally directed to ensure children's learning. It also embeds interactions in a classroom environment that is not overly structured or regimented. Studies suggest that children may achieve larger academic and social gains when they receive high quality instruction that specifically targets skills in a manner that matches children's skill levels. It provides instruction through positive, responsive interactions with the teacher. Public policy must address the need for preschool teachers to receive effective professional development in using effective instructional and emotional support strategies.

4. How do teachers talk with children?

- Do teachers talk with children while they are playing?
- Do teachers show caring by making comments specific to what a child did or said?
- Do teachers ask children questions about what they are doing or saying?
- Do teachers ask open-ended questions that encourage children to think in different ways?
- Do teachers give feedback that focuses on children's effort, rather than simply saying a general comment about what the child did (e.g., "Good job.") or praising a child's intelligence (e.g., "You're very smart.")?

Hamre, B. K. (2014). Teachers' daily interactions with children: An essential ingredient in effective early childhood programs. *Child Development Perspectives, 8*, 223-230.

Studies indicate that teachers can promote children's academic and social-emotional development by providing emotional support (e.g., aware of and responsive to needs of children), classroom organization (e.g., set up clear classroom routines in ways that help children spend most of their time engaged in meaningful activities), and instructional support (e.g., give frequent feedback to children to expand their understanding of ideas and to encourage their continued participation). Although consistent use of support approaches may be relatively low in most classrooms, professional development activities (e.g., systematically designed coaching and coursework) can increase teacher knowledge and implementation of effective strategies. Federal and state agencies should devote resources to providing teachers with necessary professional development.

Cabell, S. Q., Justice, L. M., McGinty, A. S., DeCoster, J., & Forston, L. D. (2015). Teacher-child conversations in preschool classrooms: Contributions to children's vocabulary development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 30*, 80-92.

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of what teacher-child conversations look like in preschool settings and to identify features of conversations that promote children's language growth. Small group play sessions were transcribed for 44 preschool classrooms to assess teachers' use of strategies that elicited and led to continued conversations with children. Teacher-child conversations that result from teachers eliciting extended back and forth conversation were positively associated with gains in children's vocabularies. Further, professional development activities increased teachers' strategy use and facilitated engagement in child-initiated and reciprocal teacher-child conversations.

Ramini, E. B., Siegler, R. S., & Hitti, A. (2012). Taking it to the classroom: Number board games as a small group learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*, 661-672. doi:10.1037/a0028995

Playing linear number board games (e.g., Chutes and Ladders) was shown to have a significantly greater impact on children's math skills and later math achievement than playing color board

games (e.g., Candyland). In this study children played games in small groups in their classroom with paraprofessionals who received one hour of training. Children between ages 3 and 5-years-old were randomly assigned to play either color or number board games during six 20-25-minute sessions within 3-4 weeks of time. The results showed that the children who played the number board games had significantly greater improvements in their number estimation skills (e.g., on a paper with a line with only the numbers 0 through 10, children marked the location of a number such as 7) and numerical magnitude comparison (e.g., choosing which number was larger, 2 or 4). The paraprofessionals' comments enhanced children's learning.

Lally, J. R., & Mangione, P. (2017). Caring relationships: The heart of early brain development. *Young Children*, 72(2), 17-24. Available:

<https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/docview/1889994999?accountid=14745>

Infants are learning the back-and-forth nature of conversations and how to communicate (both verbally and non-verbally). Therefore, it is important that adults are sensitive and accurate in their interpretations of what the child is trying to communicate. This responsive care makes the world feel more predictable and safe for the child. A lot of stress has an adverse effect on children's brain development in that the child will be less trustful of others and more hesitant to engage in new experiences. It is also important that adults provide infants with appropriate levels of stimulation. From 7-18-months of age, children move freely and explore their environment, and their language and communication skills develop rapidly. It is important that adults allow them to make choices and to explore their environment safely. From 15-months to 3-years of age, children need clear rules for behavior and a predictable environment. Caring relationships are the key during this period of development.

Farran, D. C. (2017). Characteristics of pre-kindergarten programs that drive positive outcomes (Ch. 5, pp. 45-49). In the report, *The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. Downloadable report available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke_prekstudy_final_4-4-17_hires.pdf

Programmatic structure plays a role in quality early childhood experiences, and it is possible to develop regulations that ensure quality. For example, if getting from location to location takes too long (e.g., to reach the bathroom, playground, or to eat), the time children have for learning is reduced. However, the quality of human interactions in the early childhood program setting is the central element of quality, and those interactions vary tremendously across settings. Classroom processes can be examined by noting activities such as book reading and the richness of the language that teachers use, both of which enhance children's vocabulary development. One can also note the ratio of positive (teacher approval) to negative (teacher disapproval) comments. These comments should weigh more heavily on the positive side. There also needs to be a higher ratio of child talk than teacher talk during free play times. Less teacher control is needed when children are engaged in activities that are meaningful to them. Many of these aspects of quality in early children programs are not assessed in current rating systems. The authors made some suggestions of ways this could be accomplished.

5. How do teachers communicate with parents?

- Are families encouraged and welcome to visit?
- Do teachers talk with parents in a respectful manner?
- Do teachers have a way of communicating with parents about what the child did each day and whether they have any concerns?
- Are there events that include children's families, and how do families find out about them?
- Does this program help children to transition to their next school placement?

Bohan-Baker, M., Little, P.D., & Harvard Family Research Project, C. M. (2002). *Transition to kindergarten: A review of current research and promising practices to involve families.*

Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-transition-to-kindergarten-a-review-of-current-research-and-promising-practices-to-involve-families>

This article explores the concept of *transition to kindergarten* as (1) a process that occurs over time, rather than a one-time event or activity, (2) a set of evolving relationships between individuals and groups (e.g., a child, the family, teachers), and (3) something that occurs within the context of a given community rather than as a set of ideal practices. The authors highlight a range of "promising practices" to reflect the fact that different approaches may be more or less effective in different communities. For example, many transition practices involve connecting with parents at or after the start of school, and may be viewed as low-intensive contact (e.g., flyers, open houses). The authors recommend exploring practices that adjust this timeline to contact families and students prior to the beginning of the school year, even extending into the preschool year, as well as establishing two-way communications between families and teachers that can continue as kindergarten progresses. Suggested practices include invitations to visit the kindergarten classroom during preschool, providing summer learning activities, partnering with parent-teacher associations and establishing meetings before school starts that can then continue throughout the year (e.g., family meetings, parent support groups). Several programs that implement these and other promising practices are discussed in detail, including *Countdown to Kindergarten*, a program in Boston, and *Continuity for Success*, which is a partnership between the National Parent Teacher Association and the National Head Start Association.

Cantin, G., Plante, I., Coutu, S., Brunson, L. (2012). Parent-Caregiver relationships among beginning caregivers in Canada: A quantitative study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40 265 – 274. doi: 10.1007/s10643-012-0522-0.

The authors reviewed the importance of respectful parent-caregiver relationships and communication, and they explored some of the challenges of establishing these relationships, particularly for early career caregivers. Three key factors were identified as critical to a successful relationship: *confidence*, or the trust parents and caregivers have in each other, *collaboration*, or the perception of a mutual partnership in caregiving, and *affiliation*, or the level of friendly feelings or warmth. Additional factors that may affect the developing

relationships and communication patterns between parents and caregivers include caregiver experience level, team versus individual caregiving models, and type of center (e.g., for-profit, non-profit).

Knopf, H. T., & Swik, K. J. (2007). How parents feel about their child's teacher/school: Implications for early childhood professionals. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(4), 291 – 296. doi: 10.1007/s10643-006-0119-6

The authors examined the importance of establishing positive, respectful teacher-parent relationships and methods for ensuring accurate and effective communication. In particular, the authors focused on the impact of perceptions and expectations for the relationship, and how these could affect the quality of communication. Specific recommendations were offered to ensure communications that establish and maintain a positive family-school working relationship. Recommendations included establishing initial contact at an early point to begin building trust, making an active effort to establish relationships with all families, using a broad range of communication approaches that are consistently offered (e.g., written, face to face) and establishing two-way communication methods so that individual needs, concerns and success are shared across home and school.

Reedy, C. K. & McGrath, W. H. (2010). Can you hear me now? Staff-Parent Communication in Child Care Centres. *Early Child Development and Care*, 180(3), 347 – 357. doi: 10.1080/03004430801908418

This article provided a thorough examination of two studies looking at parent/child care center communication practices. Various methods of communication were explored, including written, oral, one-on-one and group methods. Different views were also explored, including how parents and caregivers see their communication with each other, as well as how center directors perceive parent communications. Some challenges to establishing strong, productive and useful communications were explored (e.g., misunderstanding of written material due to imprecise language or second language audiences) as well as some strategies for mitigating these (e.g., using multiple methods to minimize understanding/maximize met needs, hiring bilingual staff to address language differences). The overall conclusion was that communication needs to be a two-way process, understandable to both parties, frequent/consistent, and supportive of parents, children and teachers.

Smith, A. A. & Hubbard, P. M. (1988). The relationship between parent/staff communication and children's behavior in early childhood settings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 35(1), 13 – 28. doi:10.1080/0300443880350103

The authors examined relationships between caregivers and parents in New Zealand to evaluate the impact of the quality of the parent/caregiver relationship on children's behavior and adult communication patterns. The authors found small but significant differences in outcomes in response to different strategies. For example, when staff communicated more frequently with parents, benefits were observed in the parent/staff relationship (e.g., a

warmer, more balanced and reciprocal relationship), in the staff/child relationship (e.g., child spoke to the teachers more, children were rated as better adjusted), and in child/child relationships (e.g., more dramatic play, fewer negative interactions with peers). The authors concluded that parent-staff relationships are as important as the staff-child relationships, and that center systems and conditions should reflect this value (e.g., adequate time for parent/staff contact, supporting positive and reciprocal contact).

Swik, K. J. (2004). What parents seek in relations with early childhood family helpers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(3), 217 – 220. doi:10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000012316.93327.6b

This article reviewed findings regarding the importance of strong parent-professional relationships, and which factors support or impede that development. For example, in order to establish meaningful and positive parent-staff relationships, there needs to be an effective method of communication, each party has to have mutual respect for the other, and there needs to be a positive view of the skills and contributions of each party, and from each party. The authors further note that a supportive approach to others, an interest in the well-being of others and the relationship itself, and a sense of humor are also helpful. In terms of challenges, different viewpoints about the roles each person is supposed to play (e.g., teacher as “expert” and parent as “helper” or a more collaborative style) a lack of access to resources (e.g., volunteer opportunities, time) and a misunderstanding/lack of communication about each other’s expectations can all have negative impacts on a developing relationship. The authors indicated that positive attitudes and a willingness to respectfully share ideas and give feedback in both directions (e.g., parents to staff and staff to parents) are valuable attributes in developing strong communication patterns and relationships. Collaboration and communication are valued, as are flexible opportunities to engage in various activities in ways that meet different needs (e.g., working parent schedules). Parents may wish to seek or develop programs that allow them to help/mentor/work collaboratively with other parents as well as staff, and staff may wish to develop strategies to help establish these connections, identify resources and programs that parents can access, and support parent networking.