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instructional practices
with Tier 1 evidence
ratings, as identified by
the Institute of Education
Sciences and What Works
Clearinghouse.**

Family Engagement Take-Home Packs

A Research-Based Resource to Support School Readiness

Introduction

Family Engagement Take-Home Packs offer educators a practical way to place early learning opportunities directly into families' hands. These ready-to-use resources combine high-quality books, alphabet practice, and simple guides that help families read, talk, play, and learn with their young children. *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* break down the barriers for learning outside the classroom with established routines that are easy to navigate for parents and caregivers and only require common household materials. This program fosters year-round curiosity, confidence, and engagement in young children beyond the classroom.

- Backpack
- Four Ana books by Dr. Rebecca A. Palacios:
 - *Ana Gets to Go to School*
 - *Ana's Learning Adventure*
 - *Ana Learns About Reading*
 - *Ana's Science Time*
- Alphabet Flash Cards
- Home Activities Guide



The Logic Model

This Logic Model demonstrates how *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* are designed to help districts bridge the gap between classroom and at-home learning. Many families with preK and kindergarten students want to support reading, language development, school readiness, and confidence beyond the classroom but need the resources to do so. This table outlines how *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* build frameworks for family engagement and bolster family-school relationships during and beyond the academic year.

Figure 1—Logic Model

Problem Statement: There is a need for research-backed, accessible resources that support ongoing family engagement and at-home learning for preK–grade 1 students.					
Outcome/Goal: To encourage continued learning beyond the classroom.					
Theory of Action					
Educators provide evidence-based <i>Family Engagement Take-Home Packs</i> materials.	Students engage in and utilize <i>Family Engagement Take-Home Packs</i> content and strategies with their parents or caregivers.	Students build important early-education skills by reading and engaging with the provided books and activities.	Students learn with the support of families and caregivers using the <i>Home Activities Guide</i> .	Students feel more prepared for preK and kindergarten.	Students and families have valuable, learning-focused engagement.
Logic Model					
Assumptions	Resources/Inputs	Activities	Outputs/Metrics	Outcomes	Impact
- Families want to support learning at home when expectations are clear and doable. - Young children learn through repeated, responsive interactions. - Schools are prepared to distribute packs to families. - Home language and culture are assets in early learning.	- Four Ana books by Dr. Rebecca A. Palacios <i>Alphabet Flash Cards</i> 16-page <i>Home Activities Guide</i> - English and Spanish pack pathways - Concise family-facing directions - Developmentally appropriate student activity pages - School distribution model	- Engaging activities structured with as Read Together, Talk Together, Do Together - Playful, motivating practice materials - Foundational literary learning opportunities	- Students read and reread Ana books. - Students engage with the <i>Alphabet Flash Cards</i> and <i>Home Activities Guide</i> alongside a trusted adult. - Teachers observe home-school connection, school readiness, language development, and confidence among students.	- Increased family confidence in supporting learning at home - Refined language and communication capabilities - Improved early literacy skills - Stronger home-school connections	- Children enter preK or kindergarten with stronger readiness for shared reading, conversation, school routines, and foundational literacy. - Schools strengthen equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement and extend learning across home, school, and summer bridge contexts.

Guiding Principles

The design of *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* is grounded in five guiding principles. Together, these tenets encourage collaboration between schools and families, enabling parents and caregivers to meaningfully engage in their children's academic journeys.

- **Families play an invaluable role in scaffolding early learning opportunities for young children.**
Family engagement is most powerful when it is relational, strengths-based, and linked directly to children's learning.
- **Shared reading is foundational in building family connections and early language capacities.**
Shared reading gives families an accessible way to develop oral language, vocabulary, awareness, and knowledge through repeated conversations, stories, questions, and explanations with trusted adults.
- **Early literacy skills require reinforcement in diverse settings.**
Early literacy foundations are equally built within and outside of the classroom through playful alphabet activities, beginning sound games, drawing, tracing, pointing, singing, and talking.
- **Family-focused learning resources should be accessible and responsive to home culture and linguistics.**
Equitable family engagement honors home languages and cultures and reduces barriers by providing low-preparation, low-cost, no-technology routines.
- **At-home family engagement materials support educational and developmental readiness in young learners.**
School readiness includes confidence, curiosity, routines, social-emotional growth, and the ability to participate in learning experiences.



Family Engagement and Home Learning

Learning can manifest in many different forms and in a vast array of environments. Young children are constantly gathering information from the world around them. Thus, educators, parents, and caregivers are essential to early childhood learning and development.

Family engagement is most powerful when families are treated as partners with knowledge, strengths, and fundamental roles in children's learning. The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) found that young children learn through relationships with knowledgeable, responsive adults who positively reinforce learning routines and patterns. Similarly, Palacios (2022) emphasizes the importance of family engagement in stimulating young learners' academic development.

However, many parents and caregivers find it challenging to structure learning opportunities with their young learners consistently and meaningfully. To help create at-home learning opportunities, schools and educators need resources that spearhead family engagement through simple, ready-to-use routines. Findings suggest that family-school partnerships have a greater impact when schools increase caregivers' capacities to engage with their children with structured, focused content (Mapp and Bergman 2019). Schools should create a line of communication with parents and caregivers so that family engagement becomes a shared responsibility between all parties (Office of Head Start 2026).

The *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* are a tool for building partnerships between schools and families. These packs offer accessible, concrete resources that scaffold early education routines and allow parents and caregivers to confidently participate in their children's academic growth.



Shared Reading and Oral Language

Shared reading is an integral part of early childhood development and a great way for parents and caregivers to engage in their children's learning experiences. Read-aloud time becomes even more impactful when children are invited to talk, ask questions, describe pictures, retell ideas, and connect stories to their own lives. Two independent meta-analyses found improved language and literacy outcomes in young learners who participated in child-parent reading during preK and kindergarten (Bus et al. 1995; Mol et al. 2008). Active storytelling—in which adults listen, ask questions, and guide the language of the child—has also been shown to support language development (What Works Clearinghouse 2007). The simple routines in the *Home Activities Guide* allow parents and caregivers to incorporate these research-backed strategies into family reading time with minimal setup, creating more time for shared reading and engagement.



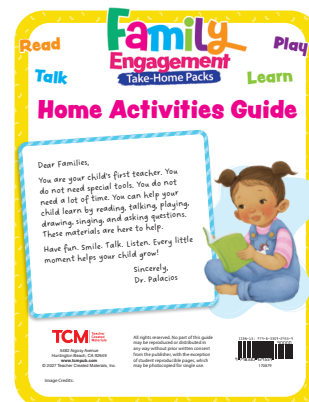
Integrate oral language instruction into reading activities.



Research to Practice

The *Home Activities Guide* implements a Read Together, Talk Together, Do Together structure that encourages families to engage in learning activities alongside their children.

- **Read Together:** Invites families into the book to create collaborative family engagement using dialogic reading principles.
- **Talk Together:** Prompts caregivers and their children to engage with dialogue and ask questions.
- **Do Together:** Extends language and literary skills into drawing, sorting, movement, and play, which fuels child motivation and strengthens family engagement.



Building Vocabulary

With a framework of shared reading and oral language development, *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* prime parents and caregivers to strengthen the vocabulary of their children. As children become familiar with learning practices, the intentionality of shared reading experiences further support their knowledge of letters and sounds. Repeated positive experiences with language and vocabulary alongside trusted adult figures build confidence and school readiness among young learners (Burchinal et al. 2022).



Intentionally plan activities to build children's vocabulary and language.



Research to Practice

Alphabet knowledge is at the core of early literacy learning, and children need intentional opportunities to learn letters and sounds (Burchinal et al. 2022). The *Alphabet Flash Cards* provide children with foundational routines for letter recognition, case matching, phonics, and more.

- Alphabet cards help families practice letters and sounds without formal homework or independent reading demands.
- These cards provide repetition and reinforcement.
- Alphabet cards encourage learning through playful, motivating exercises that spark curiosity.



Multilingual Support for At-Home Learning

Parents and caregivers want to assist their children in learning but run into challenges when at-home materials lack multilingual, home language, or home culture support. High-quality language and literacy experiences should encourage dual language learners in both home language and English development (Castro et al. 2011). Schools and educators should provide equitable family engagement materials for households whose primary language is not English. *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* provide Spanish backpack pathways to support school readiness, oral language, early literacy, and confidence in Spanish-speaking households. Educational research overwhelmingly recognizes that young learners with multilingual backgrounds should have their linguistic and cultural knowledge treated as strong, academic assets (NAEYC 2020; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017). This principle is embedded in the *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs*, allowing Spanish-speaking families to confidently participate in learning activities.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2020) argues that resources for early child development and education should have interconnected linguistic domains, and this extends to multilingual development. *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* link the domains of language, cognition, social-emotional development, and multilingual development under a comprehensive framework. This improves the accessibility of the product and provides equitable linguistic opportunities for family engagement.



Preparing for School Readiness

Readiness encompasses a variety of skills, including language development, feelings vocabulary, understanding of school concepts, and participation in adult-guided learning. By engaging in learning initiatives alongside family members and outside of the classroom, young learners can build skills in diverse environments. Additionally, the *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* encourage dialogue on topics related to school and routines through the Ana books. This resource can be readily disseminated by schools at registration, family literacy nights, Head Start outreach, and summer bridge programs to promote ongoing engagement.



Family Engagement Take-Home Packs are designed to give schools, caregivers, and young learners year-round access to family engagement materials. Education research demonstrates that knowledge gaps can arise when children lack access to focused reading and learning opportunities outside of school (Cooper et al. 1996; Allington et al. 2010; Albee et al. 2019; Kuhfeld 2019). *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* resolve this issue by encouraging parents and caregivers to play an important role in their children's language and literacy development. These packs are accessible and ready to use in parallel with classroom learning or as a school-readiness resource that helps families support foundational language and literacy skills before and during the transition to school.

Conclusion

Family Engagement Take-Home Packs foster family engagement and encourage impactful moments of reading, talking, playing, and learning between caregivers and their children. This resource is structured by research-backed tenets that form a connection-focused scaffold for educators, parents, and caregivers. By reducing barriers to at-home learning, these packs ensure young learners have access to year-round family engagement materials. When families have simple routines and accessible materials, everyday moments can become meaningful learning experiences. *Family Engagement Take-Home Packs* allow schools to make that possible.



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