A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO ENGAGING FAMILIES

1. **Build Relationships**

   Taking time to develop trusting relationships with families and caregivers will give them the confidence to learn new skills.

   - Learn the patron's name.
   - Get to know the families and caregivers – their backgrounds, their interests, their aspirations.

2. **Build a learning community**

   Building the community that sustains families and caregivers is an important way to support children's healthy development.

   - Be intentional about welcoming all kinds of families.

3. **Use "I notice…" statements to describe families' and caregivers' effective actions.**

   Families and caregivers often make good decisions on behalf of the children they care for. Using "I notice…" statements builds trust with the families.

   - "I notice that you always look right at your infant's eyes when you sing to him. This is important because he will learn by imitating the movements and sounds you make with your mouth."

4. **Use self-talk to describe your choices.**

   Self-talk simply means you are modelling your thought process – you let families know how and why you make decisions.

   - Ex: "I chose this book because I know how interested in trains this group is, and children are more likely to engage with books when you follow their interests."

5. **Provide information**

   Provide messages through multiple modalities (handouts, access to resources, etc.) because different people learn in different ways. When you develop relationships with the parents you support, it is easier to know when and how to provide new information.

6. **Model**

   Model intentional interactions with children during playtime. Model following children's interests and choosing books that are the "just right" level for their age group.

7. **Engage in reflective dialogue with families and children**

   Families and caregivers are children's first and best teachers and it is important for them to feel empowered in this role.

   - Ex: "She has been working on that drawing about *Swimmy* for a long time! How does your child engage with writing materials at home?"