

Building Relationships with Families

Strengths-Based Attitudes

- All families have strengths.
- Families are the first and foremost important teacher to 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.

Relationship-Based Practices

- Focus on the family-child relationship.
- Observe and describe the child's behavior to open communication with the family.
- Reflect on the family's individual and cultural perspectives.
- Reflect on your personal and cultural perspectives.
- Support parental competence (the parents' skills & self-confidence).
- Value a family's passion (working with both their positive and negative feelings).

LAFF Active Listening Strategy

	Actions	Strategies & Examples
L	Listen, empathize, and communicate respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use statements that demonstrate empathy: "I can understand..." "That must be frustrating." "So you feel..." • Communicate respect and appreciation: "I appreciate you contacting me."
A	Ask (open-ended) questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How: "How can I help?" How might you do that?" • What: "What times of the day might work better?" "What is most important to you right now?" • Why: "Why do you think..." • When: "When do you..." "When can you..." • Use imagery/hypothetical situations: "If I were there, what would I see when..." "What might that look like?" • Seek clarification: "Tell me a little more about..."
F	Focus on the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to concerns. • Ask about challenges, support, and resources. • Review information that has been shared & check for accuracy: "What I heard you say is..." • Comment on observations: "I've noticed that..." • Seek to build a relationship.
F	Find a first step.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the conversation full circle. • Consider information obtained and think about next step(s). • Identify at least one next step, the specifics of who is responsible, and when a follow-up meeting will take place.

(Adapted from McNaughton & Vostal, 2010; National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, n.d.; North Carolina Early Learning Network, 2020)