Introduction

A master teacher of early childhood education is one who is able to build family and community relationships. A master teacher must be able to reach out to families and communities to aid in their understanding of children’s learning and developmental needs. This teacher must also help to guide families in their extension of learning activities at home.

A teacher leader is one who advocates for children within and outside of the school. To advocate for children effectively, the teacher leader needs to have an understanding of the unique culture of children’s homes and communities. To do this, the teacher must also be an effective teacher researcher. He or she must collect data from students and families to develop a better understanding of family and community dynamics.

Family engagement in education includes both parent/guardian presence in the schools as well as the home extension of schoolwork. This engagement shows a child their family’s beliefs about the value of education and demonstrates family support of the child’s education. Thus, family engagement is extremely important to academic achievement, particularly in early childhood education. This course is designed to help teachers better facilitate family engagement by working to gain a better understanding of classroom and school families. Emphasis will be placed on understanding structural and systems barriers to family engagement, particularly among families living in poverty as well as recognizing the strengths and cultural capital in all types of families.

In this the first half of this course, students will learn about and discuss family uniqueness and strengths. Very few families are “traditional” and no two families are alike. Teachers must learn to recognize what makes a family unique and the individual strengths that children and families bring into the classroom. In the second half of the course, students will consider how to use this knowledge in the development of effective family engagement programs for their school and classroom.
In the context of the TLSI Graduate Program, development of a better understanding of effective family engagement follows a course in culturally appropriate classroom practice. Just as cultural understanding is important in classroom management, it is important in working with families and communities. Therefore, this course will require you to build on foundations of teacher inquiry and cultural responsiveness laid in previous courses.

Course objectives
(Adapted from NAEYC and Teacher Leadership Standards)

1) Understand how to support and engage families and through respectful, reciprocal relationships.
   a. Students will seek out community engagement personnel at their schools’ to learn how families are supported.
   b. Students will learn about facilitating collaboration through course reading and discussion.

2) Understand the multiple influences on development and learning.
   a. Students will learn about influences on learning through course readings, discussion, and reflection of practice.

3) Understand diverse family and community characteristics.
   a. Students will learn about family and community characteristics though course readings, case studies, and discussion.

4) Understand the different forms of social and cultural capital among classroom families and how these strengthen the family.
   a. Students will learn about forms of capital and family strength through course readings, case studies, and discussion.

5) Apply knowledge of family and community characteristics when involving families in their children’s development and learning.
   a. Students will learn how to apply knowledge of family characteristics through discussion of case studies.
   b. Students will see application of family characteristics in provided video.
   c. Students will apply knowledge through an activity with children and families.

6) Apply knowledge of family and culture to practice to promote positive outcomes for each child.
   a. Students will learn how to apply knowledge to practice through discussion of case studies.
   b. Students will apply knowledge through an activity with children and families.

7) Analyze and evaluate relationships with families and communities.
   a. Students will see analysis of relationships in provided video.
   b. Students will analyze and evaluate their own relationships with families and communities using parent interviews.

8) Create strong collaborations with families, communities, and colleagues (including CIS or other school-level family engagement personnel) to develop
comprehensive strategies to address diverse educational needs of families and the community.

a. Students will see examples of strong collaborations with families and communities in provided video.

b. Students will use all course readings, case studies, discussions, and activities to create a plan for building strong collaborations.

Course structure

The course is divided into four modules, each lasting two weeks. Modules consist of two PowerPoint lectures, two online discussion questions, course readings and/or videos, and (in all modules but one) an activity with written reflection. Students will be required to answer 2-3 questions about the module at the end of each two-week period. The instructor will post a response to discussions every Tuesday morning.

--Module One, Barriers to Engagement

The textbook reading and Children Now article introduce this course. Both discuss the importance of family engagement. Think about level of family and community involvement in your classroom and school when you are reading them.

This module’s primarily focuses on reasons that families may not become involved schools, regardless of the programs available. Well-intentioned teachers and administrators may fail to consider how difficult it is for many urban parents to become involved in the school. For some parents, school involvement may look very different it does for teachers and administrators. Many parents simply do not feel welcome. Both the McDermott & Rothenberg and Song & Wang articles discuss parent populations that feel unwelcome in their children’s school. While ethnic populations in these articles may be very different from your own school and/or classroom, consider how the culture norms of these groups interferes with involvement. Reflect on how the cultural norms (as the result of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic class) of families in your school may be at odds with family involvement.

The two case studies in this module provide unique insight to two families that we might consider “difficult”. Consider the family needs that must be met before the parents can become involved in school. Reflect on any “difficult” families in your own classroom.

Articles:
“The Importance of Family Engagement”, Children Now
“Why Urban Parents Resist Involvement in their Children’s Elementary Education”, McDermott and Rothenberg
“Immigrant Parents’ Involvement in American Schools: Perspectives from Korean Mothers.” Song and Wang

Textbook:
Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, Henderson et. al., Chapters 1&2

Case Studies:
“Blooming of Rose” From Working Together With Children and Families
“Thank You For Your Time” From Working Together With Children and Families

Assignment: A critical incident is an event that has significance for you. It is often an event that made you stop and think, or one that raised questions for you. This event often changes an aspect of your beliefs, values, attitude, or behavior. It is an incident that in some way has had a significant impact on your personal and professional learning as a teacher of young children.

In this paper, you are to recount a ‘critical incident’ in your interactions with parents/guardians of your students. This may be any interaction that made an impact on you, caused you to think differently, or caused you to question your assumptions or beliefs about families.

In your written essay, avoid real names of your students and their families (first or last) by creating pseudonyms and do not include other identifying information.

Format for a critical incident report: (Include responses to each item below.)

1. Describe the context of the incident.
2. Describe the actual incident in detail.
3. Explain why the incident was critical or significant to you.
4. Explain your concerns at the time.
5. Describe what you were thinking and feeling as it was taking place, and afterwards.
6. Mention anything particularly demanding about the situation.
7. Explain how the incident impacted your learning about family engagement, your role, or the outcomes for children.
8. Explain how it will impact your future role as a teacher.

Analysis of the critical incident: (You do not need to answer these items. Use them to guide your reflection of the critical incident you are reporting.)

When analyzing your critical incident, it may be useful to ask yourself questions such as,

1. Why did I view the situation like this?
2. What assumptions did I made about the family, problem, or situation?
3. How else could I have interpret the situation?
4. What other action could I have taken that might have been more helpful?
5. What will I do if I am faced with a similar situation in the future?
Your essay should be 2-3 pages in length. This assignment is due **Wednesday, March 5 at 3:30pm.**

*This assignment is worth 20 points*

**Reflect in forums**

1) Student reactions to “Blooming of Rose” and “Thank You For Your Time”
2) Barriers to involvement

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**Module Two, Unique Family Strengths**

The textbook reading in this module begins to discuss the uniqueness of families and how families can share their strengths. All families have a distinctive perception of how children should be nurtured and educated. This can be influenced by ethnicity and culture, but families are still very unique within ethnic groups.

The Kermani and James article discusses a method of maternal teaching very different from what might be seen in a classroom. Think about how the socio-economic level the families influences maternal teaching. What are the strengths in the mothers’ interaction with their children.

The Harry et. al. article demonstrates the disconnect between how parents and schools perceive a child or a family. It shows how schools may stereotype families or make assumptions on limited evidence. Consider why the school personnel presented in the article may have come to the conclusions that they did. What information were they lacking and might they have learned more?

“Can we Talk about Family?” and “Tim Kelly” both demonstrate information about families that could serve to inform teachers about child behavior. In “Can we Talk About Family”, think about the different perceptions of Keon’s behavior. How would a family conference help this family? What might the teacher learn? What could the teacher teach the family?

In your reading of “Tim Kelly” think about the different perceptions of Tim’s mother. How else might a teacher or counselor reached out to Maureen? How different was the perception of the teachers of Maureen’ involvement from the reality of the family situation?

The other two case studies, “Stacy Marshall” and “Wendy Driver” go together. The children are of two different racial groups and of two different socio-economic groups. The author demonstrates difference in how the families interact with the school. Think about the strengths of both families. How might you approach Stacy and Wendy’s mothers if they were students in your class? What information about these families would you need to effectively communicate?

The final article is included to get you started on the activity for module 3. Please see the activity section of this module.

**Articles:**

“Adjustment Across Task in Maternal Scaffolding in Low-Income Latino Immigrant Families”, Kermani and James

“African American Families Under Fire”, Harry et. al.
“Child Voice: How Immigrant Children Enlightened Their Teachers with a Camera”, Keat et. al.

Textbook: *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, Henderson et. al., Chapters 3&4

Case Studies:  
“Can We Talk About Family?” Harvard Family Research Project  
“Tim Kelly: A School Responds to a Family in Need” Harvard Family Research Project  
“Stacy Marshall” From *Unequal Childhoods*  
“Wendy Driver” From *Unequal Childhoods*

**Assignment:** Students will schedule a meeting with their school-level CIS (or other family involvement specialist. In schools in which several students are in this program, they should conduct the interview together. The student(s) should inquire about current family and community engagement programs and how the CIS feels about their effectiveness. The student(s) will then write a 3-4 page paper.

Using course readings and data gathered from the interview, the student(s) will analyze the available programs, their effectiveness, and consider what may be lacking. Students will also discuss any structural barriers to family involvement at their school and how these might be overcome.

When students have conducted the interview together, this paper should be a collaboration. However, students will need to include a summary of each student’s responsibilities in the writing of the paper. One team member will turn in the completed paper. Additional team members will turn in the agreed upon summary.

APA format is required. **Due March 16, 2014 at 11:55pm.**  
*This assignment is worth 40 points*

**Activity:** The end of the course activities have the potential to be time consuming and may seem overwhelming to finish while also preparing for testing. Start to plan how you will be getting all assignments completed on time. Email me your plan by **March 23, 2013 at 11:55pm.**

The Keat et. al. article is included so that you can get started on the photograph activity. The activity featured in this article is similar to your module 3 assignment. Look ahead to the assignment instructions in module 3. Chose your target children and have them start taking pictures. You should have your pictures and be ready to discuss with your children by **March 31.**
Reflect in forums
1) “Can We Talk About Family” and “Tim Kelly” in the context of course readings.
2) “Stacy Marshall” and “Wendy Driver” in context of course readings.

--Module Three, Using Knowledge of Families to Guide Engagement

In this module, we are going to start applying what you have learned about family distinctiveness to engaging families in education. The chapters 5 and 6 in Beyond the Bake Sale give some ideas to start engaging families while also addressing how to work with families from all different backgrounds. But remember, just because several families may be of the same ethnicity, culture, and/or socio-economic level, they should not necessarily be attended to in the same way. Chapter 7 discusses how parents can be engaged in the school as partners. Think about the family engagement programs that you discussed with your CIS as you are reading these chapters.

I have also included a video in this module. This is a school district in southern California with a very strong parent programs. What do you think about what they are doing with parents? How different is it from programs already in your school? How do you think something like this would work in Miami?

You will need to read A Path to Follow as soon as possible in this module. It will be your guild in creating your parent questionnaire.

Textbook:
Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, Henderson et. al., Chapters 5-7
A Path To Follow: Learning to Listen to Parents, Edwards et. al.

Video:
“ABCs of Parent Involvement”

Assignment: Select two children in your classroom whose parents you see on a regular basis. Ask these parents to have their children take photographs or draw pictures of an evening at home. Children should be allowed to create pictures of whatever they want—within reason. They should take 5-7 photographs or draw 2-3 pictures. Ask the parents to email or text the photographs to you (or however this will work best for you). You should have the photographs or drawings no later than Monday, March 31.

Using the Keat et. al. article as an example, set aside some time (about 10 minutes per child) for the children to tell you about their photographs or drawings, in their own words. Ask questions, but do not guide the discussion.

Write a 3-4 page paper on your findings. What did you learn about these two families that you did not know? How does this change your perceptions of these
families? Will this change your interaction with the parents? With the children? Tell me about how your findings relate to our case study discussions in Module 2. Use previous course readings to reference. APA format is required. **Due April 6, 2014 at 11:55 pm.**

**Please remember that you are maintaining the anonymity of the families**

This assignment is worth 40 points

**Assignments:** After reading *A Path to Follow*, develop your own questionnaire for a parent interview. As in the book, your questionnaire should be designed to gain information from a parent to begin to tell the story of the family. However, I want your questionnaire to be shorter—from 15-20 questions. Consider what you need to know to help you to understand both a child in your classroom and his or her family. Prior to turning your questionnaire in, test it out on a friend or family member so that you can be sure that your questions 1) make sense to other people and 2) are asking for the information that you want.

Send me your questionnaire as an email attachment by April 13, 2014 at 11:55 pm. Satisfactory completion of this assignment will count as 15% of your grade on the case study assignment in the next module.

**Reflect in forums**
1) Engaging families of multiple backgrounds
2) Creating parent partners and advocates

---*Module Four, Building Strong Collaborations*

In this module, we are finishing up reading. There is less than in previous modules and most of the reading is directly related to course assignments.

Chapters 8 and 9 in *Beyond the Bake Sale* focus the role of parents and teachers as advocates in schools and communities. Think about how this relates to the video from the last module as well as to Miami.

I have included a second video in this module. This one is a school in Los Angeles with very involved parents. How does this compare to the family involvement at your school? What might be the roadblocks to creating this level of collaboration?

Finally, I would like for you to reread “The Blooming of Rose”. How has your view of Rose changed? What would you do if Rose was the parent of one of the children in your classroom? I know that there is a lot for you to finish in this module, but make sure that you take the time to reflect on this case study.

**Textbook:**


**Case Study:**
“Blooming of Rose” From Working Together With Children and Families

Video:
“Overland Elementary”

Assignment: Go back to your critical incident essay from the first week of class. Review what you wrote. Then add to your paper. Re-evaluate the incident in light of new information that you have gained in this course about family engagement. Then explicitly answer the guiding questions from Part I of this assignment.

1. Why do I view the situation as I did? How do I view it now.
2. What assumptions did I make about the parent/guardian, problem, or situation? Have any of these changed?
3. How else could I interpret the situation?
4. What other action could I have taken that might have been more helpful?
5. What will I do if I am faced with a similar situation in the future?

The second part of this paper should add 1.5 to 2 pages to your original paper. Submit both part with no revisions to Part I.

Due Sunday, April 27, 2014 at 11:55 pm.
This assignment is worth 20 points.

Assignment: Chose one of the children/families that where part of your photo case study in module 3. Schedule a time with the parent and a colleague (preferably another student in this class) for a home visit.* Using the interview protocol (questionnaire) that you designed in in module, interview the parent. Try to be as relaxed and conversational as possible, but take good notes.

Using the data gathered from the parent interview and the child’s photograph descriptions, write a family story, again using A Path to Follow as a guide. Following the family story, tell me two or three important things that you learned about the family that you did not know. How will this affect your interaction with this family? How can you use what you have learned to build a stronger collaboration with the family? The final paper should be 6-8 pages, double spaced. Due Sunday, April 27, 2014 at 11:55 pm.

**Please remember that you are maintaining the anonymity of the family**
This assignment is worth 90 points

* Let me ASAP know if a home visit is not possible and why. We can discuss alternatives.

Reflect in forums
1) Family/District collaboration
2) Revisiting Rose
Course Textbooks

Articles (Available online)

Selected Chapters (Available online)
Recommended Additional Reading:

Grading:

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<td>40</td>
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<td>CIS/Family Engagement Specialist interview and paper</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Child photograph project and paper</td>
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<td>Quality forum response and reflection</td>
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<td>Quick Writes</td>
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Scale
A = 94 or above
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62
E = 59 or below

Course Policies
This, like any online course, requires active participation. All students are expected to devote time to course readings and discussion. Both quality and quantity of discussion posts will be noted and factored into a participation grade.
Because this course is imbedded in classroom teaching, discussion of children and parents in the students’ classrooms is expected, and at times requires. **However it is important that you maintain the anonymity of children and families at all times.**

Written assignments should be submitted in Word and must include the student’s name and the file name. Student initials should be in the file name (same procedure as in your previous course). As this is a graduate class, I expect papers to edited for spelling, grammar, and clarity.

APA is required. Purdue University has a very good online style guide. It can be found at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

Students are expected to maintain the pacing of the class. In some cases, this may require students to think ahead to future modules. All work is expected on the date given. Work turned in after the due date will not be accepted. If there are extenuating circumstances that prohibit work being submitted on time, please contact the instructor **before the work is due.** The instructor will help you to decide on a course of action regarding the assignment. **The instructor may not agree that an extension is acceptable.**

**Student Conduct Code**

As a result of completing registration at the University of Florida every student has agreed to the following statement:

“I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

**Please note that plagiarism from the internet, from any published or unpublished manuscript, or from any current or former student’s work will be considered a violation of the UF Academic Honesty policy. This includes plagiarizing a sentence or a portion of a sentence from another published work.** If you are not certain of the definition of plagiarism, please speak with your instructor. Failure to comply with the academic honesty guidelines 6C1-4.017, F.A.C. is a violation of the University of Florida Student Conduct Code and may result in expulsion or any lesser sanction. In this class be especially careful that you do not plagiarize. Written work submitted for a grade may be submitted to screening by anti-plagiarism software (at the discretion of the instructor)

**Acceptable Use Policy**

Please read the [University of Florida Acceptable Use Policy](http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/aupolicy.html) that can be found at [http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/aupolicy.html](http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/aupolicy.html). You are expected to abide by this policy.