



Strategies for successful group connections

<p>First, intentionally plan a welcome for families attending the group connection. Decide how to introduce the format, topics, activities, and so on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ask families to sign in to keep track of the number of families participating. An example of a <i>Group Connection Sign-In Sheet</i> can be found in this section. A customizable version is available online as a fillable PDF. > If an icebreaker is appropriate, plan how it will be done. > Next, determine how topics and activities related to parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting, and family well-being will be addressed, explored, and made meaningful for the families in attendance. > It is important to weave in the rationale and purpose of the various topics and activities that are a part of the group connection.
<p>Plan activities for active and passive learning types.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > For active learners, consider group discussions, brainstorming, role playing, homework, games, panels, hands-on activities, and music and movement. > For passive learners, include presentations, slides and videos, written materials, labels, signs, visual aids, and demonstrations. > Highlight how parents are or can be observing their child, provide opportunity for reflection or journaling as appropriate, and engage parents in activity with their child and with other parents (as applicable).
<p>Consider the written materials families will receive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Clear and straightforward directions on how to do various activities or what to focus on in discussion will help make the experience successful.
<p>Plan how to close the group connection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > If families will leave at different points in time, have staff present to touch base with them as they leave, reinforcing the key take-away messages of the group connection and sharing any additional materials with them. > If the group connection ends at the same time for everyone, have staff ask for their thoughts on the overall experience or share lessons learned, summarize the key take-away messages, and offer any additional materials.
<p>Ask that parents complete a brief evaluation of the group connection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The <i>Group Connection Feedback Form</i> is provided in the this section. It is also available online as a fillable PDF that can be e-mailed to families. > After the group connection, document what actually occurred.

It is vital that the overall experience of the group connection reinforce its name by helping parents feel connected both to other parents and to the affiliate as well.

