



# **Elevating Student, Home, and Community Assets in Early Childhood STEM Education**

September 27, 2019

Dr. Sara Hagenah

# Conversation Starters

- Strength-based
- Asset-based
- Funds of knowledge
- Citizen science
- On-ramps / access / entry points
- Equity
- Opportunity
- Belonging
- Culturally relevant
- Culturally responsive
- Culturally sustaining



# Open Door Policy

“You are valued and needed! You have an important voice and your involvement makes a difference for your child.”  
([Boise State Children’s Center](#))



# Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education

**NAEYC Position Statement:** All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities. (April, 2019, [NAEYC](#))

# Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education

NAEYC

Each child will

- demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities;
- express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring human connections across diverse backgrounds;
- increasingly recognize and have language to describe unfairness (injustice) and understand that unfairness hurts;
- have the will and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities. (April, 2019, [NAEYC](#))

# Alignment with NAEYC Standards

1. **Relationships:** Positive relationships, individual worth and belonging as part of a community.
2. **Curriculum:** Social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.
3. **Teaching:** Culturally and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching.
4. **Assessment of Child Progress:** Context of reciprocal communications between teachers and families, and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children are developing.
5. **Health Program:** Health of children.
6. **Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support:** Support families' diverse needs and interests.
7. **Families:** Collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.
8. **Community Relationships:** Establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals
9. **Physical Environment:** Safe and healthful environment.
10. **Leadership and Management:** Support. All have high-quality experiences.

# Alignment with NAEYC Standards



# Foundation = Trusting Relationships

- How do we establish relationships with students?
- How do we establish relationships with families?
- How do we establish relationships with community?
- What opportunities surface for your students as a result of these relationships?





# Asset-Based Research



- Families have abundant knowledge that programs can learn and use in their family engagement efforts.
- Students bring with them funds of knowledge from their homes and communities that can be used for concept and skill development.
- Classroom practices sometimes underestimate and constrain what children are able to display intellectually.
- Teachers should focus on helping students find meaning in activities, rather than learn rules and facts.
- Group discussions around race and class should promote trust and encourage dialogue.

[SOURCE](#)

# Asset-Based Research



- Families have abundant knowledge that programs can

le  
•  
ho  
sk  
•  
co  
•  
in

ir  
d  
g

Children with strong home to school connections thrive at school and as early childhood teachers, we can lay the foundation for a positive school experience for our students by making this a priority.

activities, rather than learn rules and facts.

- Group discussions around race and class should promote trust and encourage dialogue.

[SOURCE](#)

# Home visit case study



My first visit to Aamiina's home is something I'll never forget. When I knock on the door, I am greeted by the whole family, who smile and welcome me inside. In the living room, we all sit on the floor to eat and talk about our lives, about the family's hopes for Aamiina in her new classroom, and, of course, about the food we're eating!

I learn that in Somali culture, people eat only with their hands. They believe that if the food touches a utensil, the spirit that lives within the nourishment the food provides is broken. Unsure whether I will be comfortable eating with my hands, Aamiina's mother offers me a spoon. I politely decline, scoop up a bite of okra in my hand, and continue talking with the family. I leave their home feeling like I know Aamiina and her family. I can't wait for the school year to begin.

On the first day of school, Aamiina walks into the classroom and says goodbye to her hoyo (mom) without a single tear. She comes right over to me, and we begin to play.

# Home visit case study



Aamiina's first morning in our class flies by. Before I know it, it's time for lunch. Aamiina's family has packed all her favorite foods, many of which we enjoyed together at their home. I don't put a spoon next to her lunch, and I hope this will help Aamiina feel comfortable when she comes to the community table—but when she does, she will not eat.

I try talking with her, offering my hand to help her eat, and pretending to eat her lunch with her to share in the nourishment, but none of these things work. At the end of the day, I talk to her family, but they also have a hard time figuring out why Aamiina chose not to eat.

Later that night, I think back to my time in Aamiina's home and my conversation with her family—how we gathered on the floor in the living room to share our food and our stories. And then I realize what I've been missing.

The next day, I ask Aamiina if she would like to sit on a blanket with me while we eat lunch. She smiles, joins me, and happily begins to eat. When the other children ask why we're sitting on the floor, I tell them it's because it helps Aamiina feel safe in our classroom. Some of the children ask if they can join us on the blanket, and we all talk about the things that help us feel safe.

[SOURCE](#)

# Let's get Practical: What should we keep in mind? What actions can we take?

- Time
- Call families on the phone
- Have a backup plan
  - Alternative places to meet
- Bring supplies
- “Create some magic”
- Ask questions—and listen to the answers
- Engage with children at their speed
- Practice
- Making at home
- Math in the bathtub
- Invite feedback
- Establish 2-way communication systems
- [Professional development](#)
- Support - funding



[SOURCE](#)

# Let's get Practical: Conversation Starters

- Be organic
- Ask questions (google form survey)
  - What tools or materials is your child drawn to?
  - What does your child call you?
  - What kinds of interests have you noticed your child has?
  - Is your child afraid of anything?
  - What activities do you like to do as a family?
  - What does a typical weekend look like for your family?
  - What's something you'd like me to know about your child?
  - What are some regular household routines your child is a part of?
  - What do you think we can do at school to make your child feel included?
- [Identity self portraits](#)

[SOURCE](#)



# Foundation = Trusting Relationships

## New Ideas

- How do we establish relationships with students?
- How do we establish relationships with families?
- How do we establish relationships with community?
- What opportunities surface for our students as a result of these relationships?



**Thank you.**  
**sarahagenah@boisestate.edu**





# References & Resources

- González, N., Moll, L.C., & Amanti, C.. (2005). Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hogg, L. (2011). Funds of knowledge: An investigation of coherence within the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 666-677.
- Johnson, E.J., & Johnson, A.B. (2016). Enhancing academic investment through home-school connections. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, 12(1), 104-121.
- Rodriguez, G. (2011). Power and agency in education: Exploring the pedagogical dimensions of funds of knowledge. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 87-120.
- Vélez-Ibáñez, C.G., & Greenberg, J.B. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S. Mexican households. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 313-335.
- [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- [Gay, 2002](#)
- [Asset matrix](#)