

# ENRICHING THE COMMUNITY

A monthly publication for friends of Family Enrichment Network

## **Enriching the Community through Parent Engagement**

One of the best things to happen to the Head Start program happened in 1970 with The Parent Involvement Guidelines. As many know, the Head Start program began in 1965, and was originally set up as a program to ensure that children were ready for school when they were about to enter kindergarten. Many of the priorities at that time were around the child's health status.

If you fast forward nearly six decades, now the parent/family members are so fully rooted in their child's Head Start and Early Head Start experience, and it makes such a difference when families are engaged in their children's preschool experience. It is hard to determine what the most significant contribution results from family and parent engagement; but, speaking from my own experience, when parents do better, children do better and when parents do more within the program, then the program flourishes.

Many of you may not know this, but Head Start has its own form of governance called Policy Council. The Policy Council is made up specifically of parents of currently enrolled children in both Head Start and Early Head Start; community members who might be past parents of formerly enrolled children or the community at large. Our Policy Council has community members from both Broome and Tioga who work at education and human services agencies, and we applaud their ongoing commitment to our program's governance group.

Without the Policy Council's full engagement, we would not have a program. Their participation in voting is required to submit Head Start funding applications; approve the hire of staff to our program; approve our community and self assessment reports; and ensure that the program is fit to serve our neediest children and families. That means they are aware of program matters that are paramount to our service delivery.

In April, when I was meeting with our new Office of Head Start Program Specialist for one of our first video visits, the topic that we discussed was governance. So, right at the beginning she wanted to know about our Policy Council and the Agency's Governing Board.

For current and incoming families, make the most of your Head Start experience by getting involved in family partnership with your Family Advocate; school readiness with your child's Teachers; take part in your center's Parent Committee; and think about joining the Program's Policy Council.

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For more information about Family Enrichment Network Programs, please visit us at [www.familyenrichment.org](http://www.familyenrichment.org) or call (607) 723-8313.



*The mission of Family Enrichment Network is to provide supportive services for the optimal development of children and families. We believe in coordinating children and family services using a comprehensive and collaborative approach to improve their quality of life while ensuring the greatest value for our investment in child, adult, and parent development.*