

# *Getting Ready:* Promoting School Readiness through a Relationship-based Partnership Model

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# Purpose of Presentation

- Describe the empirical foundation and structural features of the “Getting Ready” Model:
  - Relationship-based model to promote school readiness in young children and their families
  - An integrated, ecological, strengths-based approach to school readiness for families with children from birth to 5 years of age
- Review preliminary research findings related to outcomes and processes



# What is School Readiness?



# Traditional Definitions...

- Focus on a young child's competencies at the time of school entrance (age 5 or 6)
  - “A quality that renders the child able to participate successfully in a regular public school curriculum” (Carlton & Winsler, 1999).
- Emphasize the capacities that children must develop to be “ready” to participate in formal schooling
- Suggest that the child alone is responsible for his/her school success

# Ecologically~thinking...



- *Relationships* form the ecology within which children function
  - Relationships within and across systems, settings, and contexts influence children as they develop and transition into school
- Parents and other caregivers must be ready to:
  - encourage ongoing stimulation
  - promote positive developmental outcomes in children
  - ensure consistent cross-setting supports, and
  - develop positive relationships with educational professionals



# Ecological Definitions of School Readiness

- Consider child development within the context of interacting systems (the child, peers, adults, environments, agencies, policies; Bronfenbrenner, 1977).
- Conceptualize “getting ready for school” in terms of relationships among the child, family, school, and care-giving community, and their interactions with one another
- Focus not only on promoting the skills and abilities of the child, but also on enhancing the curriculum of the home and parental competencies, thereby promoting child *and* family readiness for school.

“A product of the ecologies within which children are embedded that support their development... a set of interactions and transactions among people (children, teachers, parents, other caregivers), settings (home, school, and childcare) and institutions (communities, neighborhoods and governments)”



--Mashburn & Pianta, 2006



# Ecological Definitions of School Readiness

- Advances child competencies and readiness skills within two relational contexts:
  - the *parent-child relationship* (and the quality of interactions between parent and child), and
  - the *parent-professional relationship* (the parent in partnership with their child's educators and other professional caregivers).





# Parent-Child Relationship and Parent Engagement

- The earliest environments experienced by children are significant in how young children conceptualize relationships and in turn, how they relate with others (Dunst, 2001; Guralnick & Neville, 1997).
- Among the developmental contexts that predict outcomes for young children, those related to the *family and child-rearing environment* are most critical (Englund et al., 2004; Lamb-Parker et al., 1999; Molfese et al., 2001).
- *Parental engagement* is highly predictive of a child's developing competence in cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral domains (Englund et al., 2004; McWayne et al., 2004; Thompson, 2002).



# Parent-Child Relationship and Parent Engagement

- Qualities of parental engagement have been linked to a number of adaptive characteristics of children in preschool and at kindergarten entry (e.g., good work habits, frustration tolerance, fewer behavior problems, social skills).
- Parental characteristics of *warmth, sensitivity* and *responsiveness*; and *support for a child's emerging autonomy* are highly predictive of children's socioemotional and cognitive development (NICHD SECC).
- Active and meaningful parental *participation in language- and literacy-related activities with young children* are important in facilitating optimal school readiness and success (Arnold, Lonigan, Espinosa, 2002; Pan, Rowe, & Singer, 2005; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006; Wood, 2002).



# Parent~Professional Relationship

- Children interact in and permeate multiple systems and contexts as they develop from infancy to preschool and beyond (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).
- Relationships between parents and other adults responsible for the child's learning and development are important for establishing experiences that are consistent, coherent, and coordinated as children move between home and community (school) settings.



# Parent~Professional Relationship

- Positive relationships and *partnerships among parents and professionals* are considered primary protective factors (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998) or safety nets (Christenson, 2000) for young children.
- Collaborative partnerships among parents and professionals :
  - correlate with positive social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for children and families, and bolster intervention efficacy and efficiency (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998);
  - promote an increased focus on and engagement with families, greater provision of services in natural learning settings, greater cultural sensitivity, and a community-based system of care and education (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1993; Mendoza, Katz, Robertson, & Rothenberg, 2003); and
  - facilitate early learning and smooth transitions across systems (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001; Eayrs & Jones, 1992; Ramey, 1999).



# Getting Ready Intervention

- Grounded in evidence-based intervention strategies, family-centered principles, and collaborative structures.
- Promotes *parent engagement*, characterized by:
  - (1) *parental warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness*;
  - (2) *support for a child's emerging autonomy*; and
  - (3) *active and meaningful participation in learning*.
- Based on two validated consultation models that focus on relationships within and across systems and build competence and confidence in caregivers:
  - *Triadic* (McCollum & Yates, 1994) and *Collaborative (Conjoint) Consultation* (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 1992, 2008; Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996)

# *Triadic Strategies*

(based on McCollum & Yates, 1994)

Goal: To strengthen parental responsiveness, confidence, and competence in the context of parent-child interactions

Approach: Preschool (Head Start) teachers interact with parents and children in a triadic context during home visits and other school meetings.

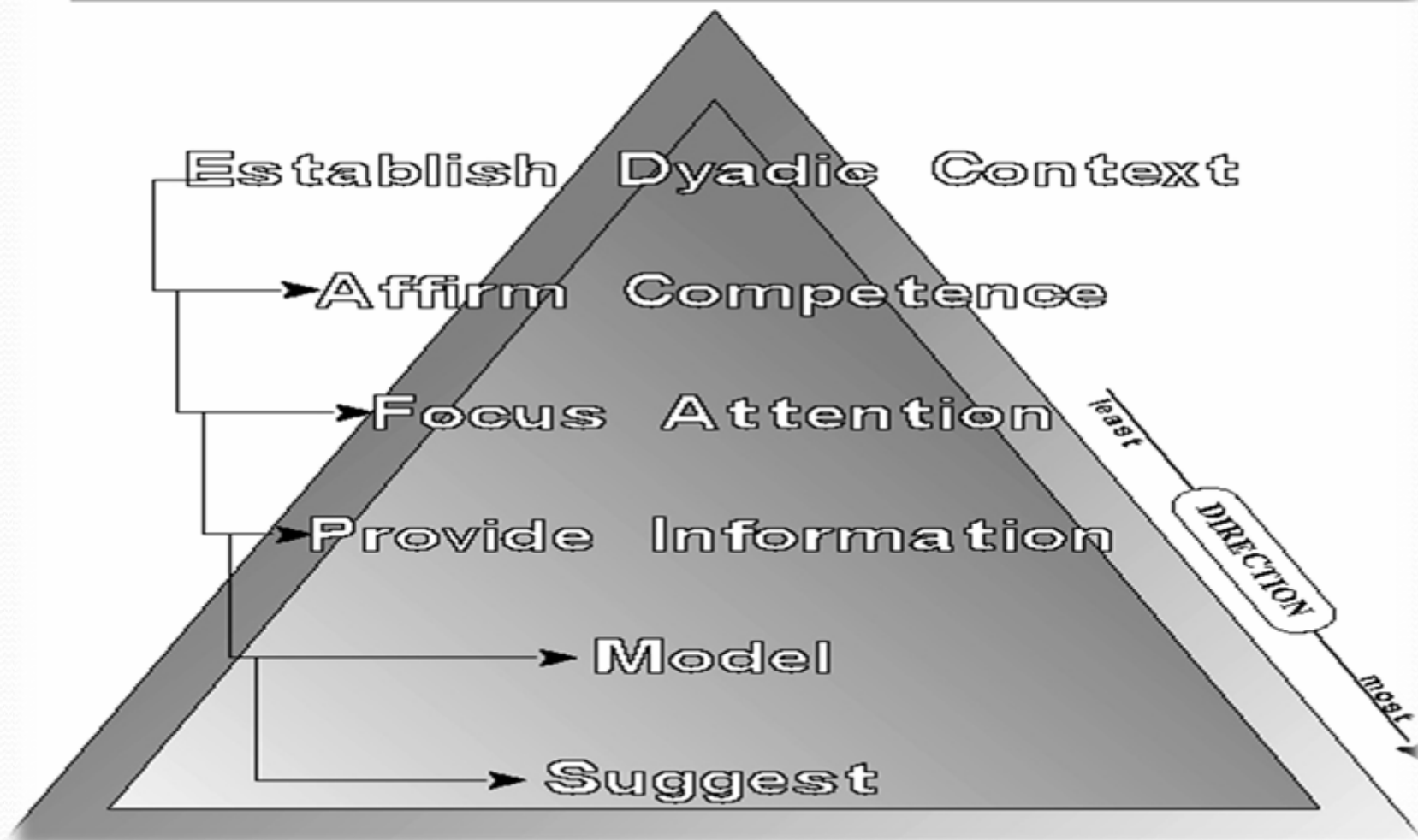
## Components:

- Establish a dyadic context
- Affirm parenting competence
- Focus attention
- Provide developmental information
- Model
- Suggest





# Least to Most Support & Direction



# *Collaborative Interactions*

(based on Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008)

Goal: To engage parents in active participation, goal setting, and decision making

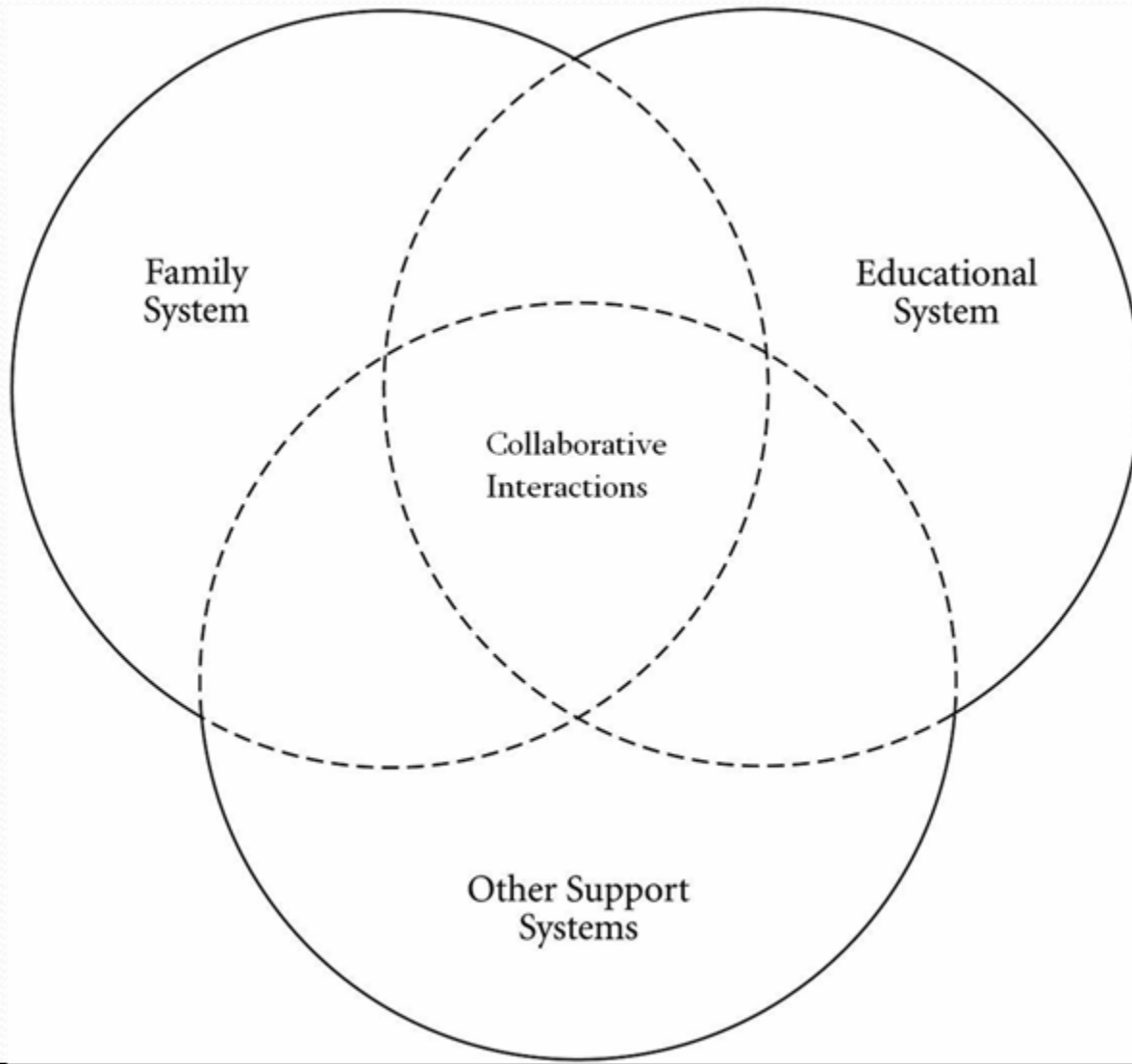
Approach: Head Start teachers (a) engage in collaborative planning with parents during home visits and school meetings, and (b) participate in conjoint consultation with parents, facilitated by behavioral consultants.

Components:

- Co-identify developmental goals for child
- Specify certain learning opportunities across settings that can support developmental goals
- Explore methods by which parents and other professionals can structure interactions with child to promote learning
- Monitor the child's growth and skill development, assess child's progress, measure goal attainment
- Cycle to new goals and learning opportunities



# *Collaborative Model*

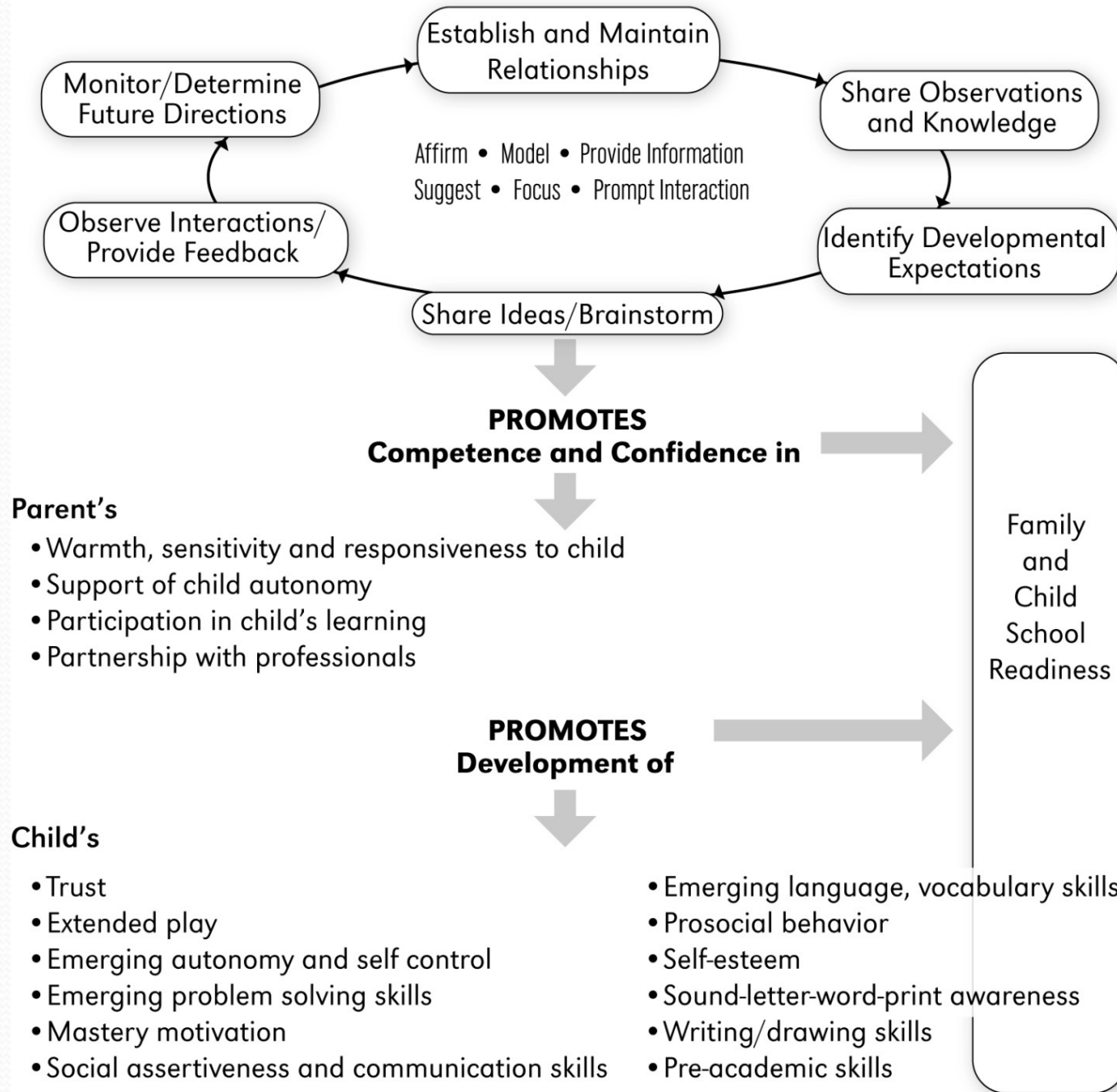




# *Getting Ready Intervention Strategies*

- Establish parent-child and parent-professional relationship
- Share observations/knowledge of child over time
- Identify mutually-agreed upon developmental expectations for child
- Focus parents' attention on child strengths and developmental needs
- Share ideas and brainstorm methods for helping child meet expectations
- Observe parent-child interactions and provide feedback
- Monitor the child's skill development and determine directions for continued growth





# Empirical Investigation of the *Getting Ready Model*

- Large scale research study funded by interagency initiative (NICHD, OSEP, ACF)
- Randomized design used to assess the extent to which children's cognitive, socioemotional, and behavioral functioning and parental engagement are enhanced by the intervention.
- Analyses also examine what child and family factors modify the intervention, the effect of timing of the intervention (0-3 vs. 3-5), and the longitudinal pattern of change within each child.



# Sample

- 500 children (age birth to 5) and their parents and caregivers are the primary participants.
- 60 family educators/child care specialists
- Sample drawn from Early Head Start, Head Start, and Student-Parent Programs in rural and urban partner communities in Nebraska



# General Features of the Intervention

- All family educators receive general training via training institute, and on-going group and individualized coaching.
- Intervention administered via family educators in naturalistic contexts of home visits, socializations, and center activities.
- Intervention was developed with attention to current agency goals and procedures, to promote sustainability of the intervention upon project completion.
- Fidelity of procedures assessed to explore implementation issues.



# Preliminary Findings

*The Getting Ready Intervention is demonstrating significant effects in children's social-emotional functioning*

Relative to controls, children in the Getting Ready treatment group are demonstrating:

- *Enhanced levels of attachment behavior with other adults, including teachers*

The intervention focuses on *relationships between children and parents, and parents and teachers*. As relationships between parents and teachers are developing, and the parent-child relationship is being enhanced through warm and responsive interactions, a subsequent change may be occurring in the relationship between teachers and children.

# Preliminary Findings

*The Getting Ready Intervention is demonstrating significant effects in children's social-emotional functioning*

Relative to controls, children in the Getting Ready treatment group are demonstrating:

- *Increases in child initiative*

The intervention is aimed at helping parents support a child's *emerging autonomy*, which in turn may promote initiative and self-reliance.

Continued exploration of the effects of the intervention on this variable, along with other measures of social competence, is important.



# Preliminary Findings

*Constructs tapped by the intervention are predictive of child learning outcomes*

- A study of adolescent mothers found that the degree to which young *parents participate in learning* by providing a literacy-rich “curriculum of the home” predicts school readiness as measured on the Bracken (NASP, 2006)
- *Parental sense of competence* (indirectly targeted through GR intervention) was found to be predictive of parents’ provision of a literacy-rich home environment when parents were not depressed (NASP, 2006).
- As adolescent mothers’ observed *behaviors promotive of early learning and language* increased, children’s language scores on the PLS-4 increased (Knoche, Woods, & Sheridan, in preparation).

# Preliminary Findings

*Professional support that is family-centered, focused, and intentional is important for families at risk*

- When adolescent parents perceive high levels of professional support, children's performance on the PLS-4 increases, regardless of parents' specific behaviors that encourage learning (Knoche et al., in preparation).
- Adolescent parents who fail to engage in behaviors that are supportive of their child's learning (as measured in direct parent-child observations), and who fail to perceive professional support, have children who score lower on measures of early language (i.e., PLS-4) than those who feel as though they are receiving support from professionals.



# Preliminary Findings

*Efforts to bridge families and schools in collaborative partnering around specific concerns are effective at addressing child needs and strengthening the parent-teacher relationship in early childhood programs.*

- When implemented in early childhood settings, conjoint behavioral consultation produced large positive effect sizes at home and school across domains (early cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral).
- Significant pre-post differences were found in parents' self-reports of joining, communication with teacher, and the overall parent-teacher relationship as a function of involvement in CBC (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche & Edwards, 2006; 2007).

# What Next?

- It is likely that parents will continue to need support to ease/aide the transition of their child and family into the formal school years, including kindergarten and the early primary grades.
- Family-school consultation can be broadened to include formal means to promote partnerships for families at-risk during the transition to school.
- CBC can be part of the package of tiered family engagement interventions used to promote partnerships during the transition.