

Fun with Families

Enhance the connections between school, families, children and staff members by hosting activities grounded in play and purpose. You can even encourage families to snap a photo and share on your school's social media page or add them to a bulletin board at school.

Each activity highlights the type(s) of family engagement found in Dr. Joyce Epstein's [*Six Types of Parent Involvement*](#).

Family Treasure Chest

This fun-filled activity invites children and families to reflect on their family's history and heritage, qualities and talents. Activities like this one help to foster positive self-esteem while creating opportunities to apply literacy skills outside of the classroom.

Commonly found in Family Treasure Chests: Short stories and picture books, family photos and memorabilia.

Epstein connections: Learning at Home, Parenting

Our Neighbourhood

This arts-based mapping activity is designed to increase participants' awareness of existing resources and services in the community.

Common centerpieces of neighbourhood maps: school, home, local parks.

Epstein Connections: Collaborating with the Community

Back in Time

Invite parents to recreate their childhood memories with their children. Some ideas and topics:

Movie Night - Share favourite childhood movies

Game Night - Dust off old board games, set up a lending library of board games with the school, local library, or neighbourhood. Second-hand shops often are a treasure-trove of inexpensive board games, toys and puzzles

Hobbies - Share a hobby from your youth - magic tricks, model-building, juggling, sports, jacks, marbles, etc.

Epstein connections: Learning at Home, Parenting



Cuddle Box

Originally designed to offer emotional comfort and an ongoing sense of connection to children whose parent(s) must travel a lot for work, this hands-on activity allows parents and children to reflect on the objects, words and gestures that help them to feel connected to one another. Activities like this one help to build social and emotional learning competencies.

Commonly found in Cuddle Boxes: Love notes, words of encouragement, 'smelly' t-shirts, books.

Epstein connections: Parenting, Learning at Home

Open Creative Spaces (OCS)

Adults and children alike love to make things! A popular component of STEAM initiatives, open creative spaces can be lightly or loosely structured and include a range of low-tech and high-tech materials that inspire families to explore, learn and create together.

Commonly found in Open Creative Spaces: community partners, stations to sew, code, build (e.g., with legos or tinker toys), collage.

Epstein Connections: Learning at Home, Collaborating with the Community, Parenting

Takeout Activity Kits

Create a lending library of kits that include tools and materials for families to create, explore and learn. Connect with community partners for material resources, for additional pickup and dropoff locations, etc.

Here are some examples:

Arts & Crafts - Send kits with tools and equipment. Families keep the craft and send back the toolkit. Examples: Carmaking, knitting, rock painting, DIY slime, play dough, bath bombs, holiday decorations

Biblioscope - See if your local library lends out telescopes or encourage your municipality to participate in the [Biblioscope](#) program. The Planetarium has DIY sky maps ([FR/EN](#)) and other *Astro-Kids* activities you can print out and send home.

Offline Robotics - Print out simple instructions or send a short video or recorded message inviting families to explore together.

Outdoor/Sports Equipment - Lend snowshoes, camping gear, igloo or snow fort block forms and instructions, snowman accessories to encourage families to get outdoors every season. Grant lead: [Jumpstart](#)



Birding Equipment - Binoculars, guidebooks, DIY birdhouse equipment, information on how to participate in the Citizen Science program, the Great Backyard Bird Count. Grant Lead: [Bird Protection Quebec](#)

Epstein Connections: Learning at Home, Collaborating with the Community, Volunteering, Parenting

Meal Kits

Does your school have a healthy meals program? Is there a school cookbook with recipes from the community? Create a “meal kit” to send home. Include all the ingredients, a recipe, and encourage families to cook together. You can even host “live” cooking shows through the school’s social media account, or enlist the help and expertise of your community partners and/or families to create video capsules.

Epstein Connections: Learning at Home, Parenting

Exploring Nature

The Biosphere has [BioKits](#) available as a free download. Print out the free booklets and send home to encourage families to explore the biodiversity in their area with interactive kits and observation guides for any setting, [urban](#) and [rural](#), plus [many more!](#)

Epstein Connections: Learning at Home, Parenting

“Play is our brain’s favourite way of learning.”

- Diane Ackerman -
