



Teaching Cases on Family Engagement: Early Learning (Ages 0–8)

Teaching cases can be valuable tools in preparing early childhood educators to engage effectively with families. Because the case method presents a story in practice, it offers education students and educators an active learning opportunity. These teaching cases involve real-world situations and consider the perspectives of various stakeholders, including early childhood program and elementary school staff, parents, children, and community members.

Through case-based discussion, educators can enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and consider multiple perspectives. HFRP’s research-based case studies reflect critical dilemmas in family–school–community relations, especially among low-income and culturally diverse families. As such, the case method is a useful strategy for helping educators learn to communicate and build relationships with families whose backgrounds may differ from their own.

Title & Author	Student Gender	Grade Level	Race/ Ethnicity	Topic	Instructor Notes Available?
Friction at Madison Family Literacy Program Maricel Santos (2001)	F	Pre-K	Not specified	A teacher arranges free speech therapy for young Junie, but becomes frustrated when Junie’s mother does not fully participate.	No
Bilingual Voices and Parent Classroom Choices Margaret Caspe (2002)	F	1st	Hispanic	Parents and teachers must reconcile their differences about bilingual education.	Yes
Can We Talk About Family? Peggy Vaughan (2003)	M	1st	African American	When a student shares information about his family in school, a teacher worries about whether this sharing will strain her relationship with the child’s grandmother.	Yes
Defining “Fine”—Communicating Academic Progress to Parents Holly Kreider, Margaret Caspe (2002)	M	1st	Not specified	A teacher and principal consider how to better communicate academic progress with parents.	Yes
Erik Greer Kris Balle (1999)	M	1st	Not specified	Erik’s teacher and mother struggle to build a partnership to address Erik’s behavior problems in school.	No
What Words Don’t Say Ann Barger Hannum (2001)	M	1st	Not specified	Martin struggles with peer problems at his elementary school. How can his mother and teacher have a dialogue about sensitive issues related to race and class?	Yes
A Special Education Plan for Anabela: Does Supporting Her Needs Mean Holding Her Back? Peggy Vaughan (2002)	F	2nd	Hispanic	A classroom teacher must make a retention recommendation for Anabela, a special education student, knowing her family has opposed retention in the past.	Yes
After School for Cindy: Family, School, and Community Roles in Out-of-School Time Ellen Mayer (2005)	F	2nd	Not specified	Cindy’s teacher believes an afterschool program would help her, but Cindy’s single working mother prefers to keep Cindy with her in the afternoons.	Yes

(continued next page)

Title & Author	Student Gender	Grade Level	Race/ Ethnicity	Topic	Instructor Notes Available?
Tim Kelly: A School Responds to a Family in Need Holly Kreider (1999)	M	2nd	Not specified	Tim comes to school hungry, dirty, emotionally needy, and academically unprepared. His teacher believes his lack of care at home is contributing to his poor school performance.	Yes
What's Going on With Tomasito? Ellen Mayer (2001)	M	2nd	Hispanic	Tomasito's embarrassment when his parents drop by his school limits the development of a strong and communicative parent-teacher relationship.	Yes

To access these teaching cases online, please click the links above or visit:

<http://hfrp.org/TeachingCaseSeries>

To request instructor notes, please email fine@gse.harvard.edu.

For more teaching cases, please see:

Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H., Lopez, M. E., & Chatman-Nelson, C. (2010). *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: Case Studies Using an Ecological Systems Framework* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.