

## Build a partnership with your child care provider

**W**e all know that parents are a child's first teacher. With so many in the workforce, we also know that parents rely on other caregivers to help educate and nurture their children. With the Week of the Young Child just around the corner, working parents have the opportunity to show appreciation for the other caregivers in their child's lives and in turn, forge lasting relationships.

A strong and reliable partnership between parents and child care providers raises the quality of care that children receive outside of the home. As a parent, your involvement in the child care program that your child attends is critical. To support your child and the other families served by your child care program, here are several ways that you can work with your child care provider to have a positive impact on your child's program:

### Time

Parents can share what time they have during the workday by coming to lunch and eating with the children. Lunch out at Child Care can provide a fun and messy way to bond with the children.

- Naptime is usually planning time for child care providers. Spend an hour with your child at naptime to relieve some child care providers for planning time and to complete other tasks in the room.

- Chaperone a field trip. Field trips provide a unique opportunity for your child to be with you and his or her child care provider in the same place at the same time.

- Share a favorite book by visiting your child's child care program for story time.

- Attend parent conferences planned by your child's care providers. This is a time to talk and to listen directly to one another.

- Spend an afternoon in the spring or fall to help beautify the place where your child spends time every week. A child care program can always use an extra set of hands for cleaning, organizing, raking, planting and painting.

### Gifts

If you do not have an afternoon to roll up your sleeves, you can roll up your sleeves in your own kitchen over the weekend and contribute a favorite food. This also provides a fun way for children to share and explore family food traditions.

Gifts are a wonderfully generous way to express your appreciation. Choose something with your child using your knowledge of the program's needs. Bird feeders, plants, trees and flower bulbs to plant, books, puzzles, and other items that are beyond the essentials make terrific presents.

- When your child's care provider circulates a list of "needs" or "wants" for the program, (such as recycled Materials), make a concerted effort to help out by donating an item from this list.

- When your child begins to outgrow his or her toys and play equipment, consider donating these items to your child care provider, but first make sure you reach an agreement with your child about this contribution.

- Share an interesting article by bringing copies to share with other parents and your child's care provider. This is a budget saver that still shows you care.

Partnering with your child's care provider is a critical step in maximizing the quality of care that your child receives. You and your child's care provider share a unique relationship and your child is at the center of this partnership. With respect, time and giving in both directions, this relationship is strengthened and your child is the recipient of these gifts.

*Information for this article was provided by Early Learning New Hampshire. The organization is committed to ensure that all New Hampshire children have the opportunity to reach their full potential by expanding access to affordable quality child care and early education, supporting the child care industry; building public-private partnerships; and helping families balance work and family. [www.earlylearningnh.org](http://www.earlylearningnh.org)*