

The 7th Annual Family Engagement
LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

welcome!
we will begin
shortly...

**Ohio Statewide
Family Engagement Center**

For Every Child, Every Family, Every School

Family & Community Engagement

Concrete Strategies for your STEM Programs

PRESENTED BY:

Bunmi Esho, Family Engagement Advisor, STEM Next

Alison O'Toole, Nebraska Network Lead, Beyond School Bells



Agenda

Intro & Icebreaker

Why Engage Families in Career Connected Learning?

The CARE Framework as a Strategy for Engaging Families in STEM

Embedding Family Engagement across K-12



Welcome & Intros

What is your favorite family engagement memory?



Bunmi Esho, M.Ed.

STEM & Tech Education Advisor.
STEM Next Opportunity Fund



Alison O'Toole, PhD.

Vice President & Network Lead
Beyond School Bells
Nebraska Statewide Afterschool Network

Objectives

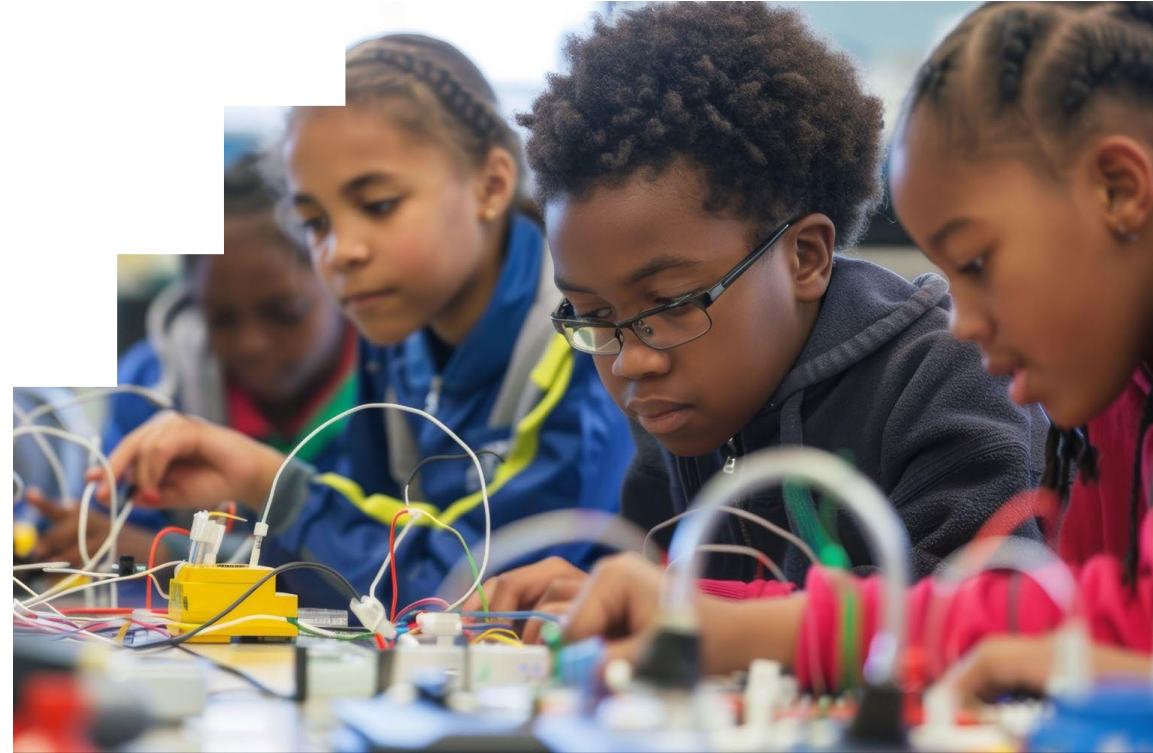
Reflect on ways we currently engage our families (in STEM)

Identify the components for effective family engagement within career-connected STEM activities

Practice adapting career-connected STEM activities to include families

Brainstorm ways to adapt STEM activities to be career-connected, family engaged

Career-Connected Learning



**Broad Skill
Development**



**Career-Connected
STEM**



**Family &
Community
Engagement**



**Connected
Pathways &
Partnerships**

Share

Your Family Engagement Journey

What do you think of when you think of family engagement?

In what ways have you engaged families?

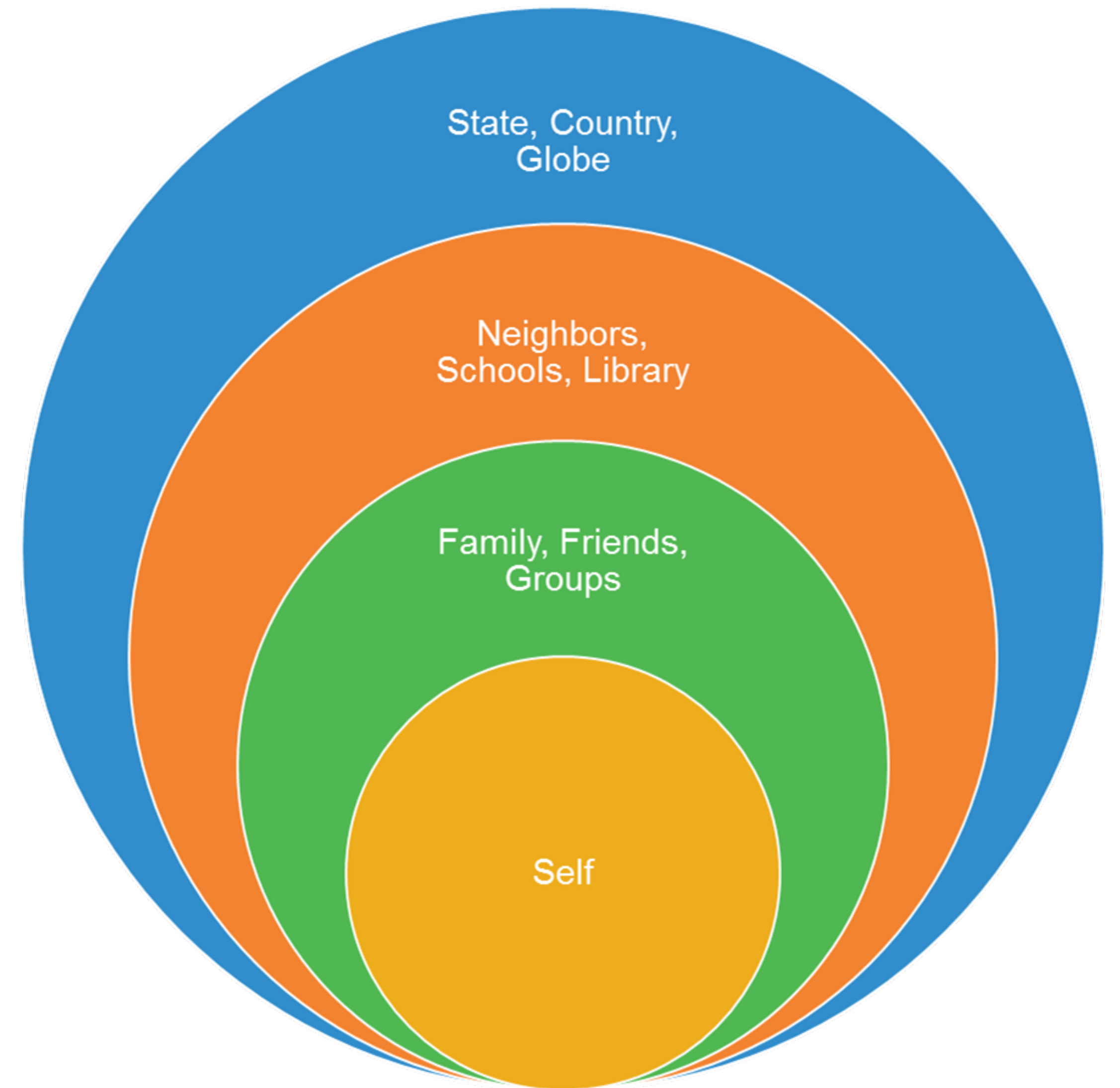


Why engage families in CCL?

65% of young adults are still trying to discover what motivates them or where their passions lie.

While, **75% of parents** say they wait for their child to initiate conversations about future planning, missing key opportunities to offer support.

findings from the July 2025 national study [The Broken Marketplace: America's School To Work Crisis](#)



The CARE Framework

Organizes ideas from research to practice.

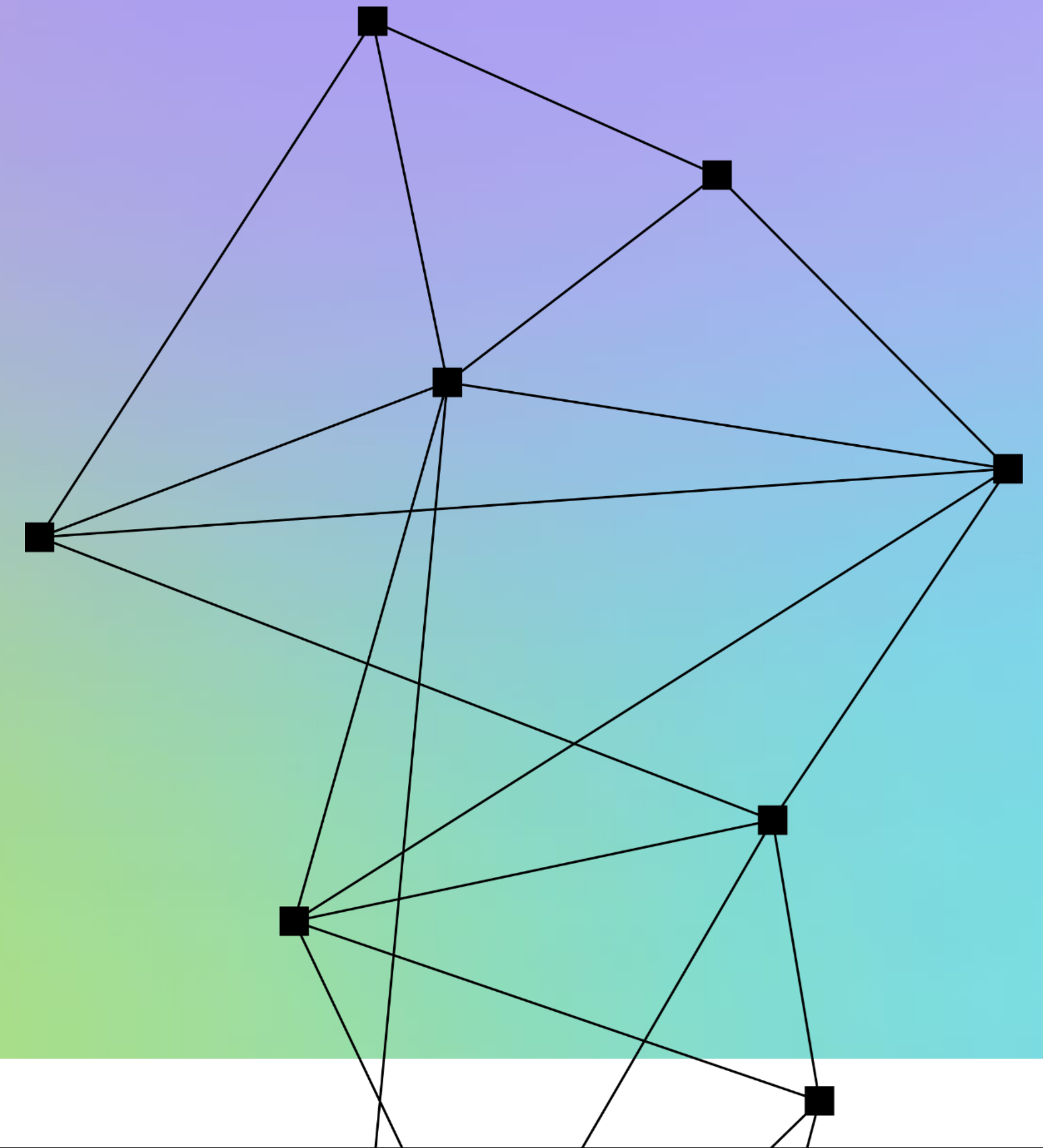
Promotes effective and supportive family engagement in STEM.



Download here: <https://stemnext.org/stem-family-engagement-planning-tool/>



How has Beyond
School Bells applied
“**CARE**” to their
work?





Beyond School Bells
nebraskachildren

CARE in Practice

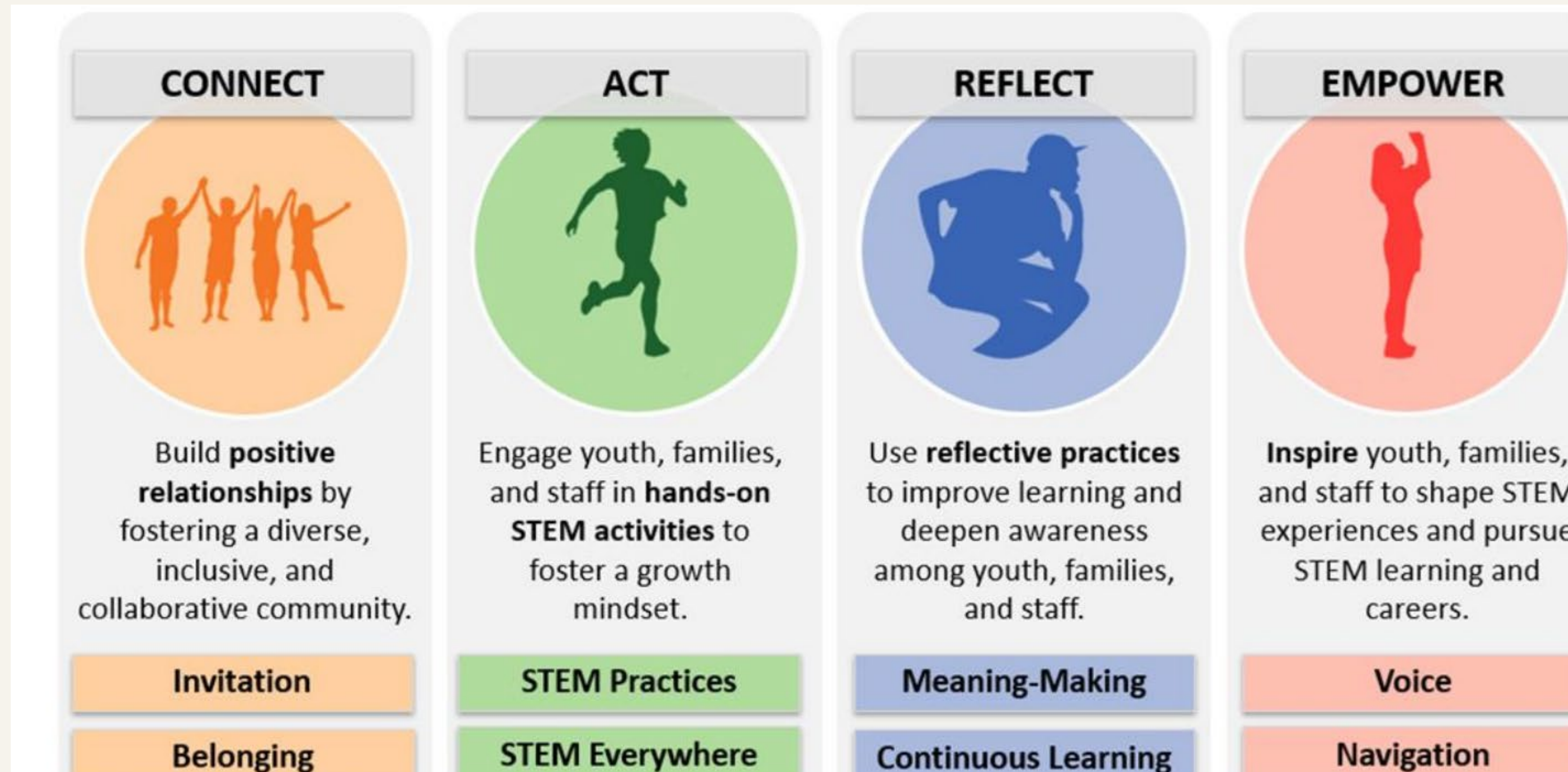
How family partnership
strengthened STEM learning and
opened pathways to careers

An 8-minute overview



CARE gave programs a shared language for partnership

02



The shift

Relationships

before activities

Families

doing STEM together

Reflection

built into practice

Family voice

shaping what comes next

“True partnership with families, in which knowledge and respect flow both ways.”

BSB built CARE into the grant structure

03

1

Learn together

Paid staff time, shared meals, and guided use of the Planning Tool and Workbook

2

Listen to families

Collect needs, interests, communication preferences, and ideas before planning

3

Apply and improve

Design hands-on experiences, gather feedback, and reflect on what changed

4

Sustain and extend

Strengthen communication, expand events, and bring STEM learning into homes

Tiered support met programs where they were, from one semester of staff development to full-year implementation with regular family engagement and take-home learning.

Broken Bow turned CARE into a complete learning cycle

CONNECT

Families shared their gardening experience, and the program displayed their contributions.

ACT

Youth and caregivers explored lettuce, building challenges, pollinators, and planting together.

REFLECT

Families connected plant choices to pollinators, home growing conditions, and prior experience.

EMPOWER

Staff asked families what they wanted from future experiences and brought those ideas into planning.



Teams used what they learned to redesign bowling and game-night experiences.

CARE changed the work behind the events

05

Family events became engagement experiences

Staff designed for shared investigation, conversation, and family contribution.

Communication became shared work

Programs moved beyond director-led outreach and coached more staff to build family relationships.

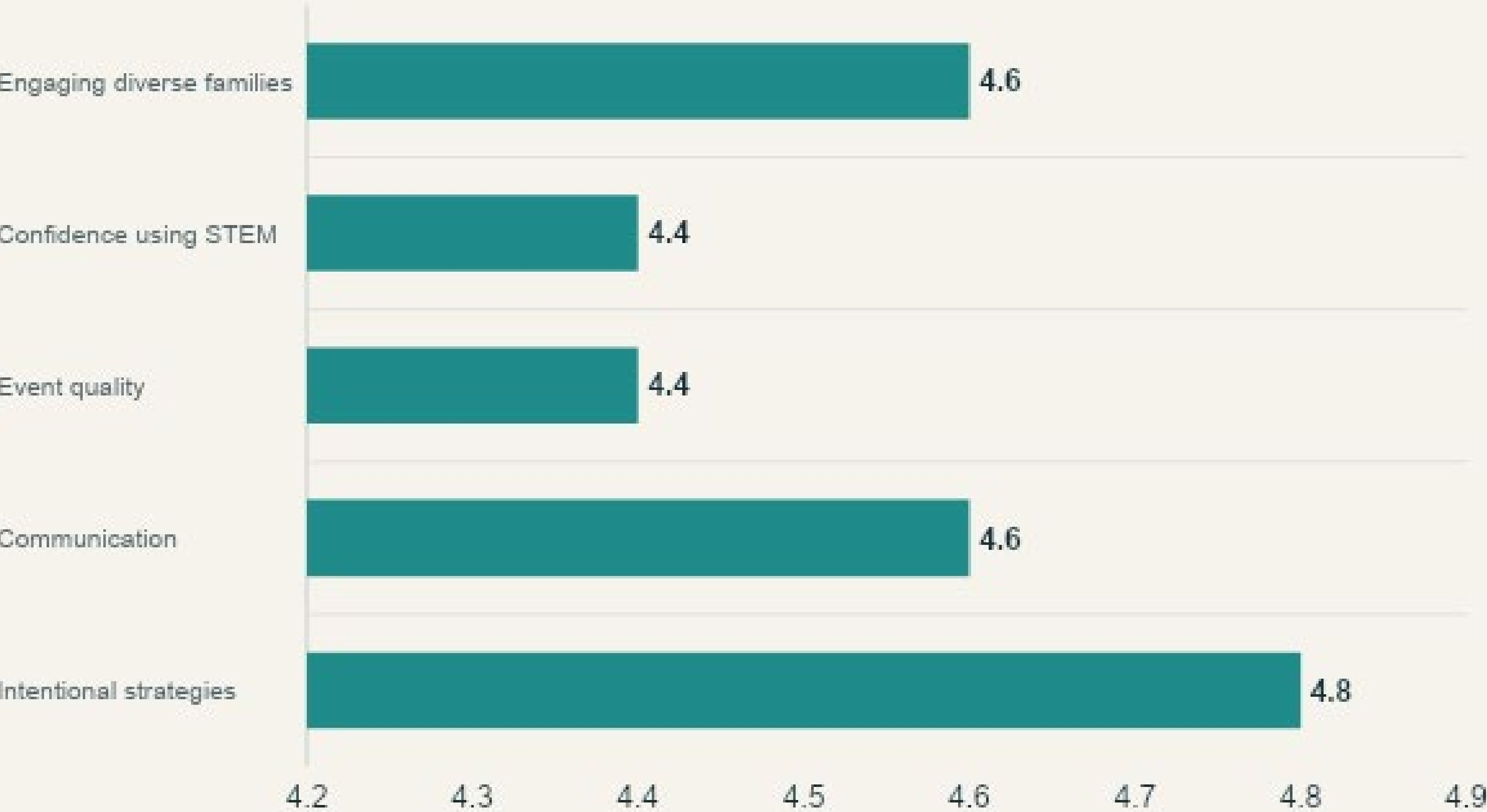
Reflection became routine

Teams debriefed experiences, identified strengths and weaknesses, and adjusted the next event.

“Staff are actively evaluating how they can connect with families.”



Programs reported stronger and more intentional practice



Mean agreement on a 1–5 scale, 2023–24

10 programs supported

80% strongly agreed PD strengthened meaningful engagement

4 programs increased family engagement events

Backpacks extended the work into homes: 128 checkouts, 97 minutes of average family engagement, and a 4.61/5 rating for quality family time.

The same foundation now supports career-connected learning

07

CONNECT Access, belonging, and relationships with role models

ACT Authentic STEM practices connected to real work

REFLECT Interests, strengths, identity, and future goals

EMPOWER Family voice and navigation of education and career pathways



Families help youth move from seeing possibilities, to exploring fit, to navigating concrete next steps.

Family partnership is the throughline

CARE established the practice

Career-connected learning extends the purpose

Together, they help families and young people see possibilities, make meaning from experience, and navigate what comes next.

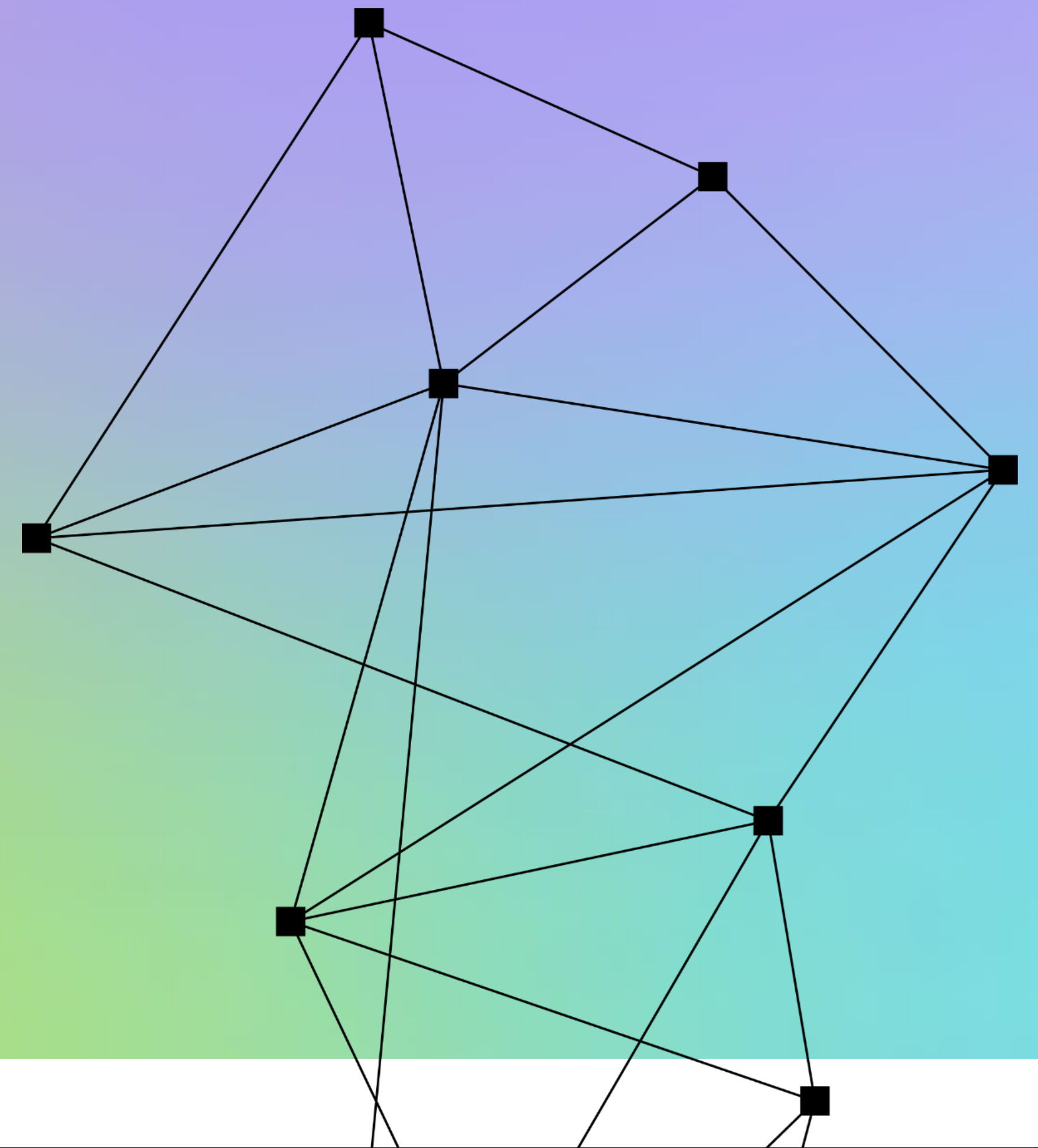


Beyond School Bells

nebraskachildren



How do you connect with families?



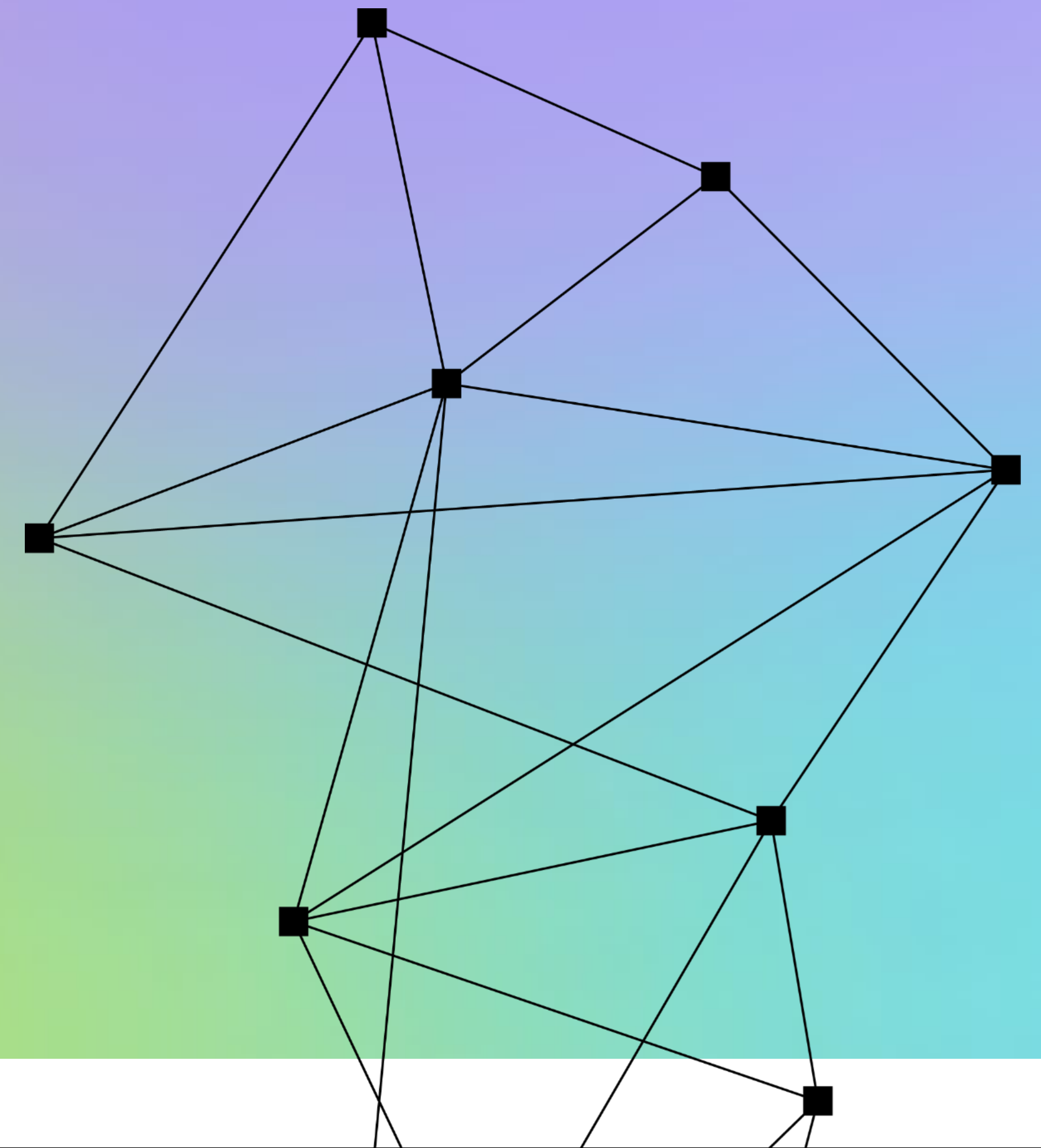


5 ways to **Connect** with families

- Share program info in family's primary language.
- Schedule Family Nights at places where families frequent.
- Support youth in leading at-home extensions to program activities, like family interviews.
- Share STEM activities that can be done at home.
- Connect families to community resources.



**How do we make
family STEM
activities career
relevant?**





What **Actions** can families take to infuse CCL?

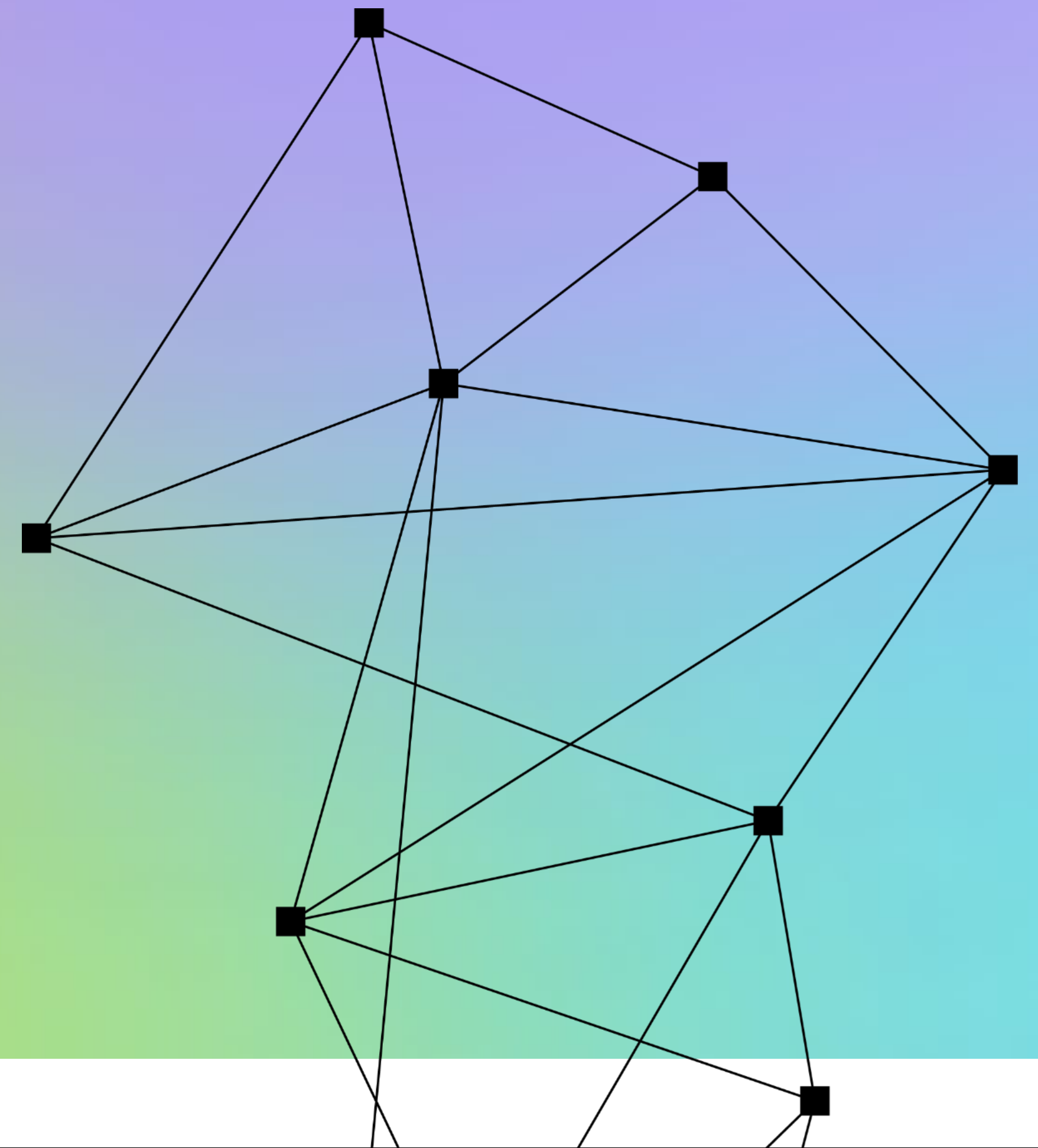
How can we make an activity like Career Night relevant to youth and families?

- Have youth and caregiver interview STEM professionals together.
- Have families reflect on what skills and knowledge is required for the job.
- Encourage caregiver to discuss what important skills they use in their job (including durable skills).
- Compare those skills to what they learned from the STEM professional.



What is another activity that we can include families in?

Engaging Families Across Grade Bands





5 Ways for Families to Engage with their Tween on Careers

1. Informal Talks on Interests
2. Compare Experiences
3. Read Books
4. STEM Activities at Home
5. Careers in the Wild



Reflect & Share

Shifting your thinking

What are ways you can embed family engagement into your current activities?



Resources for Family Engagement

Tools and Articles

Site: [The Family Engagement Project](#)

[STEM Family Engagement Planning Tool](#)

[CARE At a Glance](#)

[Family Engagement Spotlights 2024](#)

[A New Framework for Career-Connected Learning Beyond the Classroom](#)

[The Broken Marketplace: America's School To Work Crisis](#)

Ready to Use Activities

[Five Ways for Families to Connect Youth to Careers - Elementary grades](#)

[Five Ways for Families to Connect Youth to Careers - Middle School grades](#)

[Five Ways for Families to Connect Youth to Careers - High School grades](#)

[Keeping the Beat Activity Bundle with Family Engagement](#)



Career Awareness

Build an awareness of the concept of work and emphasize the value of lifelong learning. Assist all youth to develop durable and social skills and build upon their interests and strengths.

Broad Skill Development

- Provide opportunities for all youth to cultivate durable skills (i.e., critical thinking and collaboration) and growth mindset—the belief that we can improve our STEM skills with practice. Also build opportunities for youth to practice STEM specific skills (i.e., measurement, use of STEM tools).
- Demonstrate goal setting and understand the importance of teamwork in working toward a common goal.
- Build upon self-awareness of strengths, hobbies, and interest

Career-Connected STEM

- Facilitate relevant, high-quality STEM activities where youth explore the practices of STEM professionals.
- Provide examples for all youth to understand the concepts of job and career (i.e., jobs and careers in their community, career fairs, local guest speakers, STEM videos, visits to family at work).
- Design activities where youth have voice and choice and see how STEM can make a difference in their lives and communities.

Family and Community Engagement

- Provide regular communication with families to share STEM and career resources, youth progress, and successes.
- Include STEM professionals from the community and beyond into STEM activities, including virtual activities.
- Organize family and community engagement opportunities (i.e., take-home STEM activities, family STEM nights, career days) to celebrate everyday STEM.

Connected Pathways and Partnerships

- Connect out-of-school time STEM to school to create a STEM opportunity continuum, if possible.
- Organize exposure trips to local science centers, farms, or places of work to see STEM in action, including virtual opportunities.
- Connect with your state Afterschool Network and the Afterschool Alliance to support program quality.



5 Ways for Families to Engage with their Child on Careers

1. Informal Talks on Who We See

2. Ask Questions

3. Read Books

4. STEM Activities at Home

5. Careers in the Wild





5 Ways for Families to Engage with their Teen on Careers

1. Informal Talks on Skills
2. Conversations on Failure
3. Create a Personal Profile
4. STEM Activities at Home
5. Careers in the Wild





Career Exploration

Increase awareness of different careers and inspire youth to think beyond what they know. Support all youth to build a deeper understanding of themselves and the skills necessary for work.

Broad Skill Development

- Provide opportunities for all youth to build durable skills (i.e., communication, teamwork, and positive decision-making) and growth mindset ¹ (i.e., viewing setbacks as opportunities and openness to feedback). Include time to apply STEM specific skills such as measurement, rounding, equipment use, etc.
- Complete career interest assessments to connect strengths, values, and interests to career choices.
- Explore and research career clusters and pathways that align with strengths and interests.

Career-Connected STEM

- Facilitate relevant, high-quality STEM activities where youth engage in the practices of STEM professionals.
- Incorporate explicit career connections in STEM activities (i.e., local guest speakers, STEM videos, career fairs, STEM challenges, workplace learning tours).
- Design activities where youth have voice and choice and see how STEM can make a difference in their lives and communities.

Family and Community Engagement

- Provide regular communication with families and involve them in career planning and goal setting.
- Provide opportunities for all youth to learn directly from STEM professionals and role models in their community and beyond, including virtual opportunities.
- Organize family and community engagement opportunities (i.e., family workshops to discuss their role in career development) to increase awareness of STEM career development.

Connected Pathways and Partnerships

- Curate partnerships between out-of-school time STEM and schools, museums, libraries, and other local organizations to build intentional STEM pathways for all youth.
- Organize exposure trips to local science centers, museums, farms, or places of work to see STEM in action, including virtual opportunities.
- Connect with your state Afterschool Network, Chamber of Commerce, workforce development agency, and post secondary institutions (i.e., community colleges, universities, trade schools) to increase STEM pathways.

1 - [Growth mindset](#) is the belief that our intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and persistence. It is a way of viewing challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than as indicators of fixed limitations.



Career Preparation

Hone in on career choices and gaining hands-on experiences that prepare youth for the world of work. Provide all youth activities and experiences to prepare them for future STEM pathways and career goals.

Broad Skill Development

- Encourage youth to apply durable skills in work-based learning,¹ part-time employment, or leadership programs (i.e., Flight Crew and STEM Ambassadors).
- Incorporate real-life examples of people who have exhibited a growth mindset and triumphed over failure.
- Organize opportunities for youth to expand their network and build their social capital (i.e., Networking Night, mock interviews)

Career-Connected STEM

- Facilitate industry-specific projects and tasks that simulate the world of work.
- Incorporate explicit career connections in STEM activities (i.e., local guest speakers, career fairs, workplace learning tours).
- Implement youth-led projects and programming (i.e, Teen Science Café) so youth can see how STEM can make a difference in their lives and communities.

Family and Community Engagement

- Participate in community service projects and encourage youth-led initiatives.
- Partner with industry and places of work to organize tours and real-world learning experiences.
- Organize family and community engagement opportunities (i.e., family volunteers to serve as mock interviewers, discussions with families about work-based learning) to support STEM career development.

Connected Pathways and Partnerships

- Coordinate with school systems, local or regional government, and industry to support work-based learning for all youth.
- Organize exposure trips to local science centers, museums, farms, or places of work to see STEM in action, including virtual opportunities.
- Connect with your state Afterschool Network, Chamber of Commerce, workforce development agency, and post secondary institutions (i.e., community colleges, universities, trade schools) to increase STEM pathways.

1 - [Work-based learning](#) is when youth complete meaningful job tasks, such as through apprenticeships, internships, or entrepreneurship, to develop a readiness for work.

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**THE OHIO STATE
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CENTER ON EDUCATION AND
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