Recruiting families is a serious undertaking.

It matters that someone they trust asks parents to attend. By building relationships, program staff can help bridge the gap toward engagement. The project team also uses photos of families engaged in projects (and having fun) and photos of families to get to know one another and for facilitators to be able to look at what kids have learned. Every workshop starts with a moment to share and discuss photos that tell the story of the week's events.

When Roque and her team learned from Families that they were interested in the possibility of Family time, she shared the concept of family time, or "Mom"; Parents Developing Multiple Roles in Creative Computing. Here are five takeaways from Family Creative Learning that successfully re-imagine family engagement, creating computing programs that put families at the center of their kids' projects and programs:

1. ENGAGING FAMILIES

2. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

3. A HOT-ON-A-SIZE FITS ALL

4. CONNECTEDNESS AND EMPOWERMENT TAKE TIME

5. MAKE TIME TO SHARE, COLLABORATE, AND CONSIDER ENRICHMENT FOR ALL

Recruit families who have limited access to resources and social support around computing. Families participate in a series of workshops that are collaboratively implemented with staff from community organizations like Boys and Girls Clubs. Kids and their parents design and explore creative technologies like Makey Makey and Scratch. Activities didn’t always go as planned. Facilitators play an important role in helping them realize their ideas. With this approach, staff and volunteers shift from being instructors to facilitators. They help families to do activities they can explore and see them engage in ways suitable for each family's digital literacy. The project team also uses photos of families engaged in projects (and having fun) and photos of families to get to know one another.

For example, the first workshop may start with an Animate Your Name activity in Scratch, which offers some structure along with room for creativity and choice. The remaining workshops allow families to design a project of their own. All families are encouraged to help each other out with technical questions, express concerns, and get comfortable with the technology. This helps parents who might have had difficulty sitting back and watching passively. As the workshops go on, the mother chooses to learn technology and build her confidence in the ways she had limited technical knowledge of her son with this time. She came up with an idea for her project — making a violin — and her son incorporated Makey Makey and Scratch. She continued to learn about Scratch over time. Project staff check in with adults and guardians to attend. In between workshops, it communicates that program staff care.

Facilitators and volunteers shift from being instructors to facilitators. They don't tell families what to do; they allow families to design a project of their own. With this approach, staff and project staff call home to encourage continued participation. The project team also uses photos of families engaged in projects (and having fun) and photos of families to get to know one another.

We hope you will be inspired to read the work of Ricarose Roque and this research team — including the book in Parenting for a Digital Future and journal articles. You can also hear Ricarose Roque share her work in her own words on the archived webinar: Tools, Ideas, and Strategies for Directing Computational Affair in Afterschool.