
Promising Practice Fact Sheet – Strengthening Families

PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT) - Nationwide

Service

Description: Parents as Teachers is a nationwide program that provides parents with child development knowledge and parent support through the Parents as Teachers National Center. This program uses curriculum that is provided by home visitors to families during pregnancy through enrollment in preschool (age three) or kindergarten (age five). It involves a combination of 60-minute home visits (these may be monthly, biweekly, or weekly) and group meetings. The four-part intervention model known as “Born to Learn” delivers its mission-based program through parent educators to lower-income parents with young children and professional development opportunities for service providers. The concept for Parents as Teachers was developed in the 1970s when Missouri educators noted that children were beginning kindergarten with varying levels of school readiness. Research showed that greater parent involvement is a critical link in the child's development of learning skills, including reading and writing.

Target Population: lower-income parents with young children

Goals: Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices; detect developmental delays and health issues early; prevent child abuse and neglect; increase children’s school readiness and success

Cost: According to Congressional Research Service study, PAT costs an average of \$1,400-\$1,500 per family

Caseload Data: The PAT network is an organized affiliation of many organizations and family service providers across the country.

Evidence: Evidence-based home visiting program - www.parentsasteachers.org
California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse on Child Welfare
Congressional Research Service

Assessment: Home visitors (called “Parent Educators”) conduct the initial screening themselves if they have received adequate required training. As an alternative, a program may have other trained personnel or agencies conduct the screenings.

Operation in Washington:

There are currently 26 PAT programs in Washington State.

Description of Services:

- Home visitors, or “parent educators,” are typically paraprofessionals (about 50% had a bachelor’s degree in 2006-2007). These home visitors may be parents who previously received PAT services themselves. Certification requires that home visitors attend a five-day institute and a follow-up training within the first year. Training covers sequences of early development, screening techniques to identify health or developmental issues, and facilitation of parent-child interaction.
- PAT has four service delivery components: (1) home visits, (2) group meetings, (3) screenings, and (4) resource networks.

- Home visits are the primary service delivery component. During visits, parent educators share age-appropriate child development information with parents, help parents learn to observe their child's development, address parenting concerns, and engage the family in activities that provide meaningful parent/child interaction and support the child's development.
- Group meetings are opportunities to discuss information about parenting issues and child development. Parents learn from and support each other, observe their children with other children, and practice parenting skills.
- Parent educators are required to conduct annual developmental, health, vision, and hearing screenings for early identification of developmental delays and other problems.
- Regular review of each child's developmental progress identifies strengths as well as areas of concern that may require referral for follow-up services.
- Parent educators also help families to connect with needed resources and overcome barriers to accessing services. PAT programs establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community agencies and organizations that offer helpful family services.
- Early childhood professionals suggested that a program to provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and parent education to help parents understand their role in encouraging their child's development from the beginning could help improve school readiness and parent involvement.
- With funding from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and The Danforth Foundation, Parents as Teachers began in 1981 in Missouri as a pilot project for first-time parents of newborns. Recognizing the program's benefits and cost effectiveness, the Missouri legislature provided state funding in 1985 to implement Parents as Teachers programs in all Missouri school districts. Since 1985, Parents as Teachers has expanded to all 50 states and seven other countries.

Eligibility: Lower income families with young children

Findings:

- More than a dozen outcome studies have been conducted on the effects of the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn model. Studies published in peer-reviewed journals show statistically significant and sustained effects. Outcome data have been collected on more than 16,000 children and parents.
- PAT has been named one of the highest-rated applicants in the Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program (i3), scoring higher than Harvard University in the category of validation.
- Out of a field of 1,700 submissions from public and nonprofit applicants, just 49 were judged worthy to receive a share of \$650 million in i3 grants, which will be awarded contingent upon securing a commitment for a 20 percent private sector match.
- The i3 fund is part of a \$10 billion investment in school reform included in the ARRA to support innovative programs that help close the achievement gap and improve outcomes for high-needs students. For Parents as Teachers, this means funding to work in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) on 24 Bureau-funded schools across the country to reestablish BabyFACE, a home visiting/parent education program for Native American families of children birth to 3years old.
- Research on FACE, a similar 20-year-old program which uses the Parents as Teachers model to provide services for Native American children up to 5 years old, has already demonstrated that the program contributes to school readiness and third-grade reading achievement.
- BabyFACE will serve high-needs American Indian families living in the catchments areas of BIE schools not currently offering the FACE program.
- Parents as Teachers has four independent randomized controlled trials (RCT) and seven peer-reviewed published outcomes studies.

Implications for Policymakers and Program Developers to Consider:

- Parents as Teachers utilizes home visits and group meetings as the vehicles that allow parents to empower themselves to work with their own children.

- The education field recognizes that children need support in the learning process, but parents are too often left out of this process.
- Home visits are the key to the Parents as Teachers program, but the relationships that are formed during these times are supported through group meetings. Group meetings and home visits work together to balance the learning experiences for the parent and child.

Resources:

Recommended by Seth Chamberlain, ACF and Lauren Supplee, and California Evidence-based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare as a promising program for home-visiting services

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse on Child Welfare - www.cebc4cw.org/search/topical-area/18;
www.parentsasteachers.org; www.preventchildabusesb.org/CRSHomeVisitReportOct2009.pdf

Child Trends, “What Works for Home Visiting Programs,” 7/27/2010 www.childtrends.org;

Literature reviews and meta-analyses by Sweet, M.A. and Applebaum, M.I. (*Home Visiting Best Practices: A Review of the Literature, May 2007* - www.birth-beyond.com/ and Deanna Gomby (*Home Visitation in 2005: Outcomes for Children and Parents* – www.ced.org/projects/kids.shtml/#new)

Kimberly S. Howard and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn in “The Future of Children” latest issue; (Journal Issue: Preventing Child Maltreatment Volume 19 Number 2 Fall 2009)
<http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=71&articleid=514>

Congressional Research Service report Home Visitation for Families with Young Children by Karen E. Lynch & Emilie Stoltzfus, 10/23/2009 www.preventchildabusesb.org/CRSHomeVisitReportOct2009.pdf