All children will learn, grow, and develop to realize their full potential.

Born to Learn™
Parents as Teachers in the Child Care Setting
Parents as Teachers Born to Learn™ Model in Child Care

Working parents have the same desire and need to learn about effective parenting as do all parents. In addition, they have special needs unique to their situations. Working parents often lack the opportunity to share concerns, problems, and successes with parents of children of similar ages. They may have guilt feelings about entrusting their infant to the care of others. Participation in a parent empowerment program with the person the parent has trusted to be their child’s other care provider helps develop a team relationship that benefits the child, parents, and other care provider.

Rationale for Parents as Teachers in the Child Care Center

Parents as Teachers in Child Care is a model of the nationally acclaimed Parents as Teachers Born to Learn program. The goal of this adaptation is to enhance the quality of child care and to improve the communication and mutual goal setting by parents and the child’s other care provider. The Parents as Teachers Born to Learn model can help strengthen the relationship between parents and care providers by helping them share an understanding of the child, as well as their common goals and experiences. It’s about forming a partnership.

Child Care Center Pilot Project Implementation

In 1985-86, a not-for-profit child care center in St. Louis adapted the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn program model and implemented a pilot project for eight families with infants enrolled in the same infant classroom. The lead teacher was a Parents as Teachers Born to Learn certified parent educator. The pilot project’s success led to expansion that included all of the early childhood classrooms at the center. Each lead teacher was an early childhood educator as well as a certified Parents as Teachers Born to Learn parent educator who conducted personal visits and group meetings for the families in that classroom.
Expansion to Other Sites

Interest in the program grew to include implementation in many types of child care centers: not-for-profit, for-profit, corporate, university sponsored, school district sponsored, Early Head Start, Head Start, etc. The program has now expanded to include many other communities throughout the United States. It has been found that Parents as Teachers Born to Learn program in the Child Care Center is an effective communication tool for all types of accredited child care centers and all kinds of working families.

Goals of Parents as Teachers in the Child Care Center

Program Goals and Values
The following are the goals and core values of the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn program model:

Program Goals

- Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices
- Provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Increase children's school readiness and school success

Core Values

- Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers.
- The early years of a child's life are critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and in life
- Established and emerging research should be the foundation of parent education and family support curricula, training, materials and services
- All young children and their families deserve the same opportunities to succeed, regardless of any demographic, geographic or economic considerations.
- An understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions of diverse cultures is essential in serving families.
Parents as Teachers Born to Learn™ Model in Child Care

Program Description

Program Elements

Implementation of the Born to Learn Model in a child care setting looks very similar to that of a district program. There are a few adaptations to the four program elements that build on the relationship of the care providers and their families and the nature of the child care setting:

- **Personal visits**: Personal visits are offered to families enrolled in the child care setting. The visits can be at the child’s home or at the child care setting.

- **Group meetings**: Group meetings are held when the parent is already there. They often times are held in the evenings at pick-up time, sometimes in the mornings at drop-off time, or sometimes over lunch hours when parents work near by.

- **Screenings**: The care provider/parent educator is trained to conduct screenings for the children in the child care setting. This is a comfortable setting for the child and also to share information to all those who care for the child. It is an opportunity for parents and care providers to discuss the child’s development in all the environments (home and school) that impact his learning.

- **Resource Networking**: Through daily contact the care provider/parent educator is aware of needs of the family and can help connect them to area resources.

Organizational Structure

Many parts of this organizational structure are already in place in child care centers. Modifications can be made to meet the needs of each individual center. It is important to keep in mind that Parents as Teachers is an international model but a local program. How it looks at each child care site may vary somewhat.

Parent Educator

A caregiver trained to implement Parents as Teachers Born to Learn Model in the child care center is both a child care
provider and a parent educator. This person needs to have a strong knowledge base in child development and be caring and compassionate to children, the profession, and the program. They also need to be a good communicator, non-judgmental, be able to empower parents, practice confidentiality, and have a good sense of humor. Experience indicates that the effective parent educator is also well organized and resourceful.

The parent educator is primarily responsible for building a strong parent-teacher partnership. In addition to planning for and providing personal visits, she/he participates with families in daily visits, implements the elements of Parents as Teachers Born to Learn and is responsible for necessary record keeping on individual families served.

After successfully completing six days of Born to Learn Institute and submitting an approved implementation plan she/he receives initial parent educator certification. The parent educator in addition to serving families with the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn materials also seeks more professional development annually for annual recertification.

**Parents as Teachers Coordinator**

The Parents as Teachers coordinator could be a care provider/ certified parent educator. The Parents as Teachers coordinator is responsible for supervising record keeping, is the contact person for Parents as Teachers National Center, and assists other parent educators in the implementation.

The coordinator, in addition to all the essential attributes of a good parent educator, should have good organizational and supervisory skills; be a good communicator to peers; and demonstrate a dedication to the program, the center, and the families. A team of two parent educators sometimes fills this role well. Building on the strengths model, one member of the team portrays good communication skills to co-workers, and the other member portrays good organizational skills.
Program Supervisor

The child care center director, program coordinator, or other agency administrator may serve as overall Parents as Teachers program supervisor. This is a person who can provide leadership to the program and must be knowledgeable of Parents as Teachers. The supervisor is required to attend the first two days of Parents as Teachers Born to Learn Institute including the supervisor's session or is encouraged to attend the entire week of training. (See attributes described under Parents as Teachers Coordinator.)

Funding

Funding to support a Parents as Teachers Child Care program may come from many sources. In some states, health, mental health, and social service agencies are committing funds for the delivery of the program as a cooperative effort with child care centers. Federal Child Care Development Block Grant monies for child care training and enhancement have been used to help support Parents as Teachers Child Care as have Head Start and Early Head Start training dollars.

Private funding sources may include local foundations, corporations, businesses, and the United Way. Local service organizations may donate money for materials that would support the parent educators' work, i.e., Kiwanis, Lions Club, etc.

Local school districts may collaborate with child care centers to provide services to families they are unable to reach through their Parents as Teachers Born to Learn program.

Population Served

Funding sources may dictate the types of families a program is able to serve. Experience has shown that when a child care center successfully incorporates Parents as Teachers Born to Learn into their site, it becomes part of the overall services a family receives. For example, when families enroll in the child care center they
will automatically be offered Parents as Teachers services. As always, it is still up to the family to take advantage of the services.

Many accredited child care centers are already offering parent-teacher conferences and parent group meetings. With minimal adaptation, such as offering personal visits that include parents and child instead of traditional parent/teacher conferences, child care sites can incorporate Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn* into their programs. The Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn* Curriculum provides centers with valuable resources and information to assist in working with families and children.

**Service Delivery**

The delivery of the Parents as Teachers components in the child care center varies. It is suggested that Parents as Teachers Child Care programs offer monthly personal visits and four group meetings to each family in a year. The parent educator is usually, but not always, the child’s teacher/caregiver. The personal visits, group meetings, and developmental screenings are delivered to the families with children in that parent educator’s particular classroom. Depending on the organizational structure of the center, the family and child may have the same parent educator for three years if looping or family-style care giving is being done. Alternatively, a new parent educator may be assigned as the child changes classrooms. The parent educator may offer a transitional personal visit or group meeting when the child is moving to a new class and new teacher. Also, all Parents as Teachers records will move with the child throughout their time at the center.

**Personal Visit**

Personal visits provide the parent educator and the family the opportunity to relate to one another in a one to one setting. The parent educator can share educational guidance that is relevant to the individual child’s development and provide support for specific parenting issues. The parent can share specific information about their child.
• **Daily contact.** The parents and teacher/caregiver have daily contact; hence much parent support is done during the conversations at drop-off and pick-up time when parents and caregivers review the child’s daily activities. Mini-visits are unique to PAT in the Child Care Center. Parents are encouraged to be part of their child’s day and programming. When parents bring their child into the center in the morning, they routinely describe to the teacher any events that would be helpful for the caregiver to know, and any needs their child may have. Likewise, when the parents pick their child up in the evening in addition to written messages, the teacher shares at least one specific observation and activity that happened that day. While parents are invited to participate in the classroom activities, time can be an issue and needs to be respected.

In addition to the mini-visits, a minimum of four personal visits are conducted each year with each family. The Parents as Teachers Born to Learn Curriculum is used to help plan each visit. The visits are conducted in an area away from other children such as a staff lounge, director’s office, or even outside.

• **Initial home visit.** Just prior to the family's entry into the child care center, the child’s parent educator conducts a home visit. The visit will last about one hour, perhaps longer if a sibling is present. The purpose of this visit is two-fold. The child is getting to know his teacher/caregiver in his own home where he is most comfortable. Also it is a quiet, comfortable place for parents to ask questions and the parent educator to share information.

The First Visit Plan, found in the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn Curriculum Module B, is used to plan this visit. Observing the parents and child in their natural setting enables the parent educator to personalize her/his input to the family, share educational guidance that is relevant to the child’s development and the home environment. Once rapport is established with the family, it is important that
parents clearly understand what they can expect of the center and what the center, in turn, expects of them. It is critical that parent educators be responsive to parent observations, questions, and concerns at all times. This visit is the beginning for establishing the agreement and understanding between teacher and parents that is critical in order for a partnership to form. This is the beginning of sharing and setting goals together

- **Center visit.** Just prior to the family’s entry, the parents and child visit in the child’s new classroom. They stay the morning, during which the parents play with the child in the new environment and attend to their needs as they would at home. This communicates to the child that his parents like and approve this new place. The teacher is also getting to know the child through the parents. This lets the parents know that their values, wishes, culture, and family style is respected. The teacher models routine care and welcomes the family so they will come to feel that the child’s new room is also their room and they are always welcome.

- **Personal visits at the center.** These visits are identical to the First Visit Plan format but are conducted at the center. Scheduling visits near the child’s birthday or half-birthday, with other visits between, is a meaningful way to schedule the year.

The visits can be scheduled at convenient times for parents, educator, and child so that all can be present. Pick-up times and drop-off times are the most popular choices. The parent educator may draw from the child and her/his daily observations to help decide what issues and activities should be shared and from which plan in the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn Curriculum to draw information. A space separated from the other children is prepared; perhaps a classroom that is not occupied, an office, or the staff lounge could be used. When a child is transitioning to a new classroom, the child’s new caregiver/parent educator should be included in the visit and perhaps the setting would be the new classroom.
Personal visits are not parent-teacher conferences and not all personal visits should be scheduled during the same week. Remember that visits may be scheduled at other times if a family has a need or an issue. In respect of parents’ time, no longer than an hour is recommended for each visit. This is a time for sharing child development information and discussing specific skills the individual child has demonstrated. It is a time for parents to share any changes they have noticed in their child at home and to ask questions and share concerns. Time is also allowed for the parent educator to share about the classroom routine and the child’s behavior at the center.

“What did I learn that I wouldn’t have known if I hadn’t had this visit?” is a question that helps the parent educator to become more in tune with the family. The time that it takes to build partnerships benefits all concerned!

Group Meetings

Group meetings for parents serve two major purposes: first, to provide a vehicle for additional information on various topics from the center staff and from community experts; and second, to create opportunities for parents to share successes and common concerns about their children’s behavior and development.

Parent group meetings are offered a minimum of four times a year in child care centers. Some centers alternate monthly between group meetings and personal visits. The delivery method may vary according to the facility and parent group. In structuring and planning for delivery to the parents in the child care center, it is important to keep in mind that the group can include the parents of children from one room or two same-aged rooms combined.

Group meetings are most effective when they meet the needs and address the perspectives of working families. It is important to encourage participation. A successful meeting often has an element of fun, hands-on activities, involvement with or videos of the children, and serves food. The “Breakfast
Bunch”, “Brown Baggers” (especially nursing mothers), and potlucks are always popular! In order for parents to make the effort to attend, group meetings must be appealing and meet parents’ needs (Module A, p. GM-1). It is important to consider how to support working families without increasing pressure and feelings of guilt.

Group meetings in the child-care center are also an effective way to use the videos from the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn™ Curriculum. Using the videos in the group meeting format will stimulate conversation about neuroscience information as well as child development. It ties in well with discussing the curriculum used in the classroom and appropriate developmental practices at the center and at home. Pages I-18 and 19-34 in the Born to Learn Curriculum Module B are plans for the First Visit and Early Visit, respectively. The information from the First Visit and the Early Visit videos, in particular, can be successfully used during a group meeting with parents of varying aged children.

Following is a list of other possible suggested topics for group meetings with many supportive materials from the Born to Learn Curriculum:

**Child development**
- How to survive a toddler
- Reading aloud: Effective ways to use books — Temperament differences in children
- What to do with a toddler until Monday
- Toilet learning

**Learning through play**
- How fantasy helps children grow — Nursery rhymes — More than fun

**Health issues**
- Ask the pediatrician
- How to live with a picky eater; nutrition
- Working and caring: What to do when your child is ill
Family issues

- Shopping with a toddler
- Sibling rivalry

Screening

Screenings are one of the four essential elements implemented by all Parents as Teachers Born to Learn programs. It can be part of the Parents as Teachers Child Care or could be a referral to a local Parents as Teachers program or health agency. There are advantages to both. When a child is screened by someone he knows such as his teacher/care provider, he might feel more comfortable, perform the skills better, and produce a more accurate screening score. On the other hand, a good collaboration can be formed with the community resource agencies if they conduct developmental screenings. By doing this, parents become familiar with the schools, or agencies that their child may someday attend.

Through annual checks using the screening tools for Health, Hearing and Vision and using Development Screening parents and care providers discuss what typical development is and what to expect next. Early detection of delays help families secure intervention support when needed. Discussing with families about the child’s growth and development by using a standardized screening tool is another communication avenue and learning tool.

Resource Network

Early childhood resources in the community that partner together, talk, and communicate for the child and family complete the whole Parents as Teachers picture. The caregiver might be the one person knowledgeable of a family’s unique needs. Knowledge of resources in the community is crucial in order to link families to needed supports and for families to be able to access these supports themselves. One program or service cannot provide everything for all families. Collaboration is critical in meeting the varying and changing needs of families and children.
Evaluation

In 1994, the Public Policy Research Centers at the University of Missouri-St. Louis conducted an independent developmental assessment of Parents as Teachers Child Care in six diverse child care settings. The assessment was designed to measure parent and caregiver satisfaction and provide a basis for improving training and program design as the concept expands to more centers. Results from the developmental assessment indicate that the Parents as Teachers program has successfully integrated its goals into the programming efforts at the six selected sites. Major benefits documented by parent and staff interviews and surveys included the following:

- Improved communication and comfort levels between parents and caregivers.
- Better understanding of the role of the parent in the child's life on the part of caregivers.
- Improved morale and feeling of professionalism on the part of caregivers.
- Increased understanding of child development on the part of parents of limited education and economic means.
- Increased staff retention

Establishing and Maintaining Parent-Parent Educator Partnerships

It is imperative that families and child care centers come to agreement and understanding in establishing goals, values, and objectives for children. All members of this relationship have much to share and contribute to this common goal. Mutual respect in coming to this agreement lets parents know that they are valued and are the most important teachers in their child's life. Parents also recognize that culture, beliefs, and family styles will be respected and their wishes followed. Honest exchanges of ideas are the basis for support and serve as resources for families and teachers.
The reason to find time to work closely with parents is that doing so helps teachers teach better, parents parent better, and children develop and learn better. ¹

The center that implements a Parents as Teachers Child Care program is special and creates an environment that has the open communication necessary for the Teacher/Parent Partnership.
