

# PAT Alaska

**A Special Feature with Information on Parents as Teachers (PAT) Involvement and Early Childhood Development**

**Update**

## Parents as Teachers and Literacy: An Essential Connection

Parents As Teachers' unique contribution to literacy development is that it brings research-based information (grounded in both neuroscience and developmental research) to parents of very young children. This knowledge helps them understand how they can impact their child's development and provide them rich emerging literacy activities. PAT recognizes that literacy and learning to read are progressive skills – so PAT begins prenatally, and teaches parents about the steps along the way.



Scientists have long believed that reading with children creates a context in which learning can occur. Today, however, they have evidence that reading is one of the experiences that actually influences the way young brains develop—that is, the way the brain's circuitry is “wired”. The neuroscience information in the PAT *Born to Learn* curriculum lends scientific credibility to the information shared with parents. The empirical evidence from neuroscience research, developmental research more broadly, and language and literacy research, in particular, supports the PAT approach to fostering literacy readiness skills.

Unlike literacy programs aimed solely at language or reading skills, PAT offers a holistic approach to development, promoting development across all domains of development, ensuring that the whole child is developing on target. Research supports this holistic approach in that children who become successful readers tend to exhibit age-appropriate sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and social skills as they progress through the preschool years.

An emphasis on the child's language development permeates the PAT program. The *Born to Learn* curriculum stresses recognizing and responding to babies' cues, talking and reading to children, involving babies with books from infancy on, knowing how to select age-appropriate books and how to interact with children and books at all stages of development, providing a variety of literacy materials in the home and encouraging hearing screenings (emphasizing the link between hearing and language). These are all activities that emergent literacy research has shown are related to good literacy outcomes.

PAT is helping parents build the necessary foundations for learning to read!

**Adapted from information from Lynn Tiede, Policy Manager, Parents As Teachers National Center**

In reality, literacy begins much earlier than the age of four. It begins with thousands of loving interactions with parents after an infant is born. It begins as a child develops a sense of self worth by realizing that his or her accomplishments, whether they be learning to roll over or to recite the alphabet, are important to significant others. It begins with sitting in a safe lap, hearing a familiar bedtime story. Eventually a child will want to emulate the parent and read too. Reading then, begins with meeting the child's physical, social, and emotional needs, followed by exposure to more formal literacy skills.” According to Ed Zigler, Ph.D from Yale and co-founder of Head Start

Funding by a grant from the US Dept. of Education

### Parents as Teachers

A fun, early learning program for soon-to-be parents and parents with children up to five years of age.

### Research Shows:

PAT children outscored their peers on measures of school readiness and later school achievement.

PAT children were more advanced than other 3 year-olds in language and social development, problem-solving, and other intellectual skills.

PAT children performed better than non-PAT children in elementary school.

PAT parents took a more active role in special education; lower incidence of abuse and neglect.

### What We Do:

Personalized home visits with a certified Parent Educator, trained in child development, who is eager to help parents give their children the best beginning.

Family Play Times where families can learn new things about children, parenting and share experiences with other parents.

Regular Developmental Screenings to ensure children's development is on track and to detect possible delays.

A Resource Network that can help parents find services in their community, if needed, that are beyond what PAT can do.

### How to Contact Us:

Melissa Pickle- PAT Alaska State Coordinator at mpickle@ruralcap.com or (907) 865-7345

## LITERACY RELATED EVALUATIONS

**State of Kansas:** The results of an independent evaluation of 17 Kansas PAT programs in both urban and rural settings conducted by Overland Park Research & Training Associates showed that in the area of literacy development children who participated in PAT tell or retell stories more frequently than do children who did not participate in PAT. This demonstrates a child's ability to use verbal language and memory skills. And, parents who participated in PAT reported that they read to their child more frequently than do parents who did not participate in PAT. Research shows that one of the best activities for preparing a child to read is to read to them.

*(Pfannenstiel, J. Evaluation Report: Kansas Parents as Teachers Project. Overland Park, Kan.: Research & Training Associates, 1988.)*

**Binghamton, N.Y., studies:** A series of studies of PAT program participation and school readiness were conducted in the Binghamton, N.Y., School District, beginning in 1992. A pilot study focused on a sample of poor, high-needs children. Pre-kindergarten assessments showed that compared to matched comparisons, PAT children had better language skills and were twice as likely to be reading-ready by kindergarten.

*(Drazen, S. and Haust, M. Raising reading readiness in low-income children by parent education. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, August 1993.)*

**Missouri Parents As Teachers Pilot Project: Outcomes at Age Three and in Early Elementary School:** 75 project families were randomly selected from the 380 first-time parents who had participated in PAT for three years. The pilot project families and a matched comparison group represented Missouri's urban, rural and suburban communities. Assessments of children's abilities showed that **Parents As Teachers children at age 3 were significantly more advanced in**



**language, problem-solving and other intellectual abilities, and social development than comparison children.** PAT parents were more knowledgeable about child rearing practices and child development. Participating parents were more likely to regard their school district as responsive to their children's needs than were parents of comparison group children.

[Pfannenstiel, J., and Seltzer, D. Evaluation Report: New Parents as Teachers Project. Overland Park, Kan.: Research & Training Associates, 1985; Pfan-

nstiel, J., and Seltzer, D. New Parents as Teachers: Evaluation of an Early Parent Education Program. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 4, 1-18, 1989)

## FEED ME A STORY!

**What difference can reading aloud to a child for 30 minutes per day make?**

*If daily reading begins in infancy, by the time the child is 5 years old, he or she has been fed roughly 900 hours of brain Food! Reduce that experience to just 30 minutes a week and the child's hungry mind loses 770 hours of nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and stories. A kindergarten student who has not been read to could enter school with less than 60 hours of literacy nutrition. No teacher, no matter how talented, can make up for those lost hours of mental nourishment.*

Source: US Department of Education, America Reads Challenge

Go to Early Literacy at [www.readyforlearning.net](http://www.readyforlearning.net)



## LITERACY: A UNIVERSAL ISSUE FOR AMERICA.

*The National Reading Panel found that 40 percent of children read below basic skill levels. A significant number of these children that had difficulty reading came from families that had no risk factors, but came from middle-class families.*