

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

# Parents as Teachers

research and program quality



Parents as Teachers  
national center

Parents as Teachers National Center believes that research and program quality go hand-in-hand. Our nationally recognized evidence-based *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model has a strong research foundation with numerous studies demonstrating positive outcomes. We emphasize program quality and model fidelity, working with our program sites nationally and internationally to maximize our positive impact on children and families.

## What others are saying about Parents as Teachers

Listed as a model program by Strengthening America's Families: Effective family programs for prevention of delinquency. <http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org>

Listed as "What Works" in Child Trends Guide to Effective Programs for Children and Youth under "Parenting or Family Component" and "Home Visiting."  
[http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/ParentsAsTeachers\(PAT\).htm](http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/ParentsAsTeachers(PAT).htm)

Listed on the Proven and Promising Practices Web site.  
<http://www.promisingpractices.net>

Listed as a best practice on the Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies Web site.  
<http://casat.unr.edu/bestpractices/alpha-list.php>

Listed as a promising program by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Model Program Guide. [http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/parent\\_training\\_prevention.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/parent_training_prevention.htm)

Listed as Level 3 rating by Helping America's Youth.  
<http://guide.helpingamericasyouth.gov>

Listed as an "Educational Program that Works" by the National Diffusion Network, 1995.  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/EPTW/index.html>

Listed as evidence-based and promising program that prevents child maltreatment by Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina. [http://www.preventchildabusenc.org/resourcecenter/evb/index\\_html](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org/resourcecenter/evb/index_html)

Listed as evidence-based practice on Health Matters in San Francisco Web site developed by the Building a Healthier San Francisco coalition (BHSF) and the Healthy Communities Foundation.  
<http://www.healthmattersinsf.org>

Listed as Level 3(promising) in scientific rating and Level 2 (medium) in relevance to child welfare rating by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC) for Child Welfare.  
<http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org>

## Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> Program: An Evidence-Based Home Visiting Program

Evaluation has been integral to the success of Parents as Teachers since its inception. Research studies have been conducted and supported by state governments, independent school districts, private foundations, universities and research organizations, and outcome data have been collected from more than 16,000 children and parents. Researchers have used rigorous research designs, including randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental methods. Studies published in peer-reviewed journals have shown statistically significant and sustained effects. The following summary of key outcomes demonstrates that Parents as Teachers achieves its goals and makes a real difference in the lives of children and families.

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### *Goal #1: Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices*

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Parents as Teachers parent educators support the development of strong parent-child relationships by providing information to families about parenting skills, parent-child interactions, and child development. Parent educators model, consult, and coach on parenting practices, and engage in parent-child activities designed to foster observation of the child's behavior and parent-child interaction.

### *Outcome: Parents as Teachers parents are more knowledgeable about child development and child-rearing practices.*

Parents as Teachers parents were found to engage in effective child-rearing practices, such as enrolling their children in quality child care, leading to children's increased school readiness and later school success. The length of Parents as Teachers enrollment also had a significant effect on positive parenting practices (Zigler, Pfannenstiel & Seitz, 2008).

Parents as Teachers parents scored significantly higher than comparison parents on four of six parent knowledge scales, including the importance of physical stimuli in their child's development, appropriate discipline, and knowledge of child development (Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1985; Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1989).

Parents who received the Parents as Teachers neuroscience-infused *Born to Learn* curriculum showed improvements in parent knowledge (general development and neuroscience knowledge), parenting behavior and parenting attitudes (McGilly, 2000).

Fully 95 percent of parents rate Parents as Teachers as "very helpful" and over 85 percent report that they learned to more effectively interact with their child, better understand child development and spend more time with their children (Research and Training Associates, 2002).

**Outcome: Parents as Teachers parents engage in more language- and literacy-promoting behaviors with their children.**

Parents as Teachers parents read more to their children, use more techniques to support book/print concepts, and have more children's books in the home (Albritton, Klotz & Roberson, 2004; Research Training Associates, 2006; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008).

Results of a multi-site randomized trial showed that for families with very low income, those who participated in Parents as Teachers were more likely to read aloud to their child and to tell stories, say nursery rhymes and sing with their child (Wagner & Spiker, 2001; Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1996).

Parents as Teachers parents engaged in a wide variety of activities that supported learning in the home. More than 75 percent of Parents as Teachers parents reported taking their child to the library regularly, modeling enjoyment of reading and writing several times a week, and giving children the opportunities to purchase or receive books several times a month (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1996).

**Outcome: Parents as Teachers parents are more involved in their children's schooling.**

Participating parents were more likely to regard their school district as responsive to their children's needs than were parents of comparison group children. Fifty-three percent of Parents as Teachers parents rated their district as "very responsive" versus 29 percent of comparison group parents (Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1985, 1989).

A significantly higher proportion of Parents as Teachers parents initiated contacts with teachers and took an active role in their child's schooling. For example, 63 percent of parents of Parents as Teachers children versus 37 percent of parents of comparison children requested parent-teacher conferences (Pfannenstiel, 1998).

Parents as Teachers parents demonstrated high levels of school involvement, which they frequently initiated, and supported their children's learning in the home. Ninety-five percent attended special events at their schools, nearly 67 percent worked monthly as volunteers in the school or classroom, 75 percent participated in PTA and PTO meetings, and 67 percent communicated with their child's teachers by phone on average four times a year. Most (85 percent) parents initiated a contact with the school or teacher. About 75 percent of parents always assisted with home activities related to school work (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1996).

More Parents as Teachers parents attended parent conferences than parents in the comparison group. Ninety percent of parents of Parents as Teachers kindergarteners "always" attended parent conferences (O'Brien, Garnett & Proctor, 2002).

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## Goal #2: Provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues

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Programs offering Parents as Teachers services through the *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model provide regular child screening that focuses on developmental progress regarding cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skills, as well as identification of vision/hearing/health issues. As a consequence, children with possible developmental delays and vision/hearing/health issues are identified early and referred to further services when needed.

**Outcome:** Children who participate in Parents as Teachers receive developmental screenings and have delays identified early.

In a recent program year, more than 200,000 children were screened by Parents as Teachers programs and more than 30,000 developmental delays, almost 5,000 vision problems, almost 7,000 hearing problems, over 6,000 physical delays/health problems, and more than 4,000 social-emotional/mental health problems were identified in the children (Parents as Teachers National Center, 2008).

At age 3, Parents as Teachers children performed significantly above the national norms on a measure of school-related achievement, despite the fact that the Second Wave sample was over-represented on all traditional characteristics of risk. More than one-half of the children with observed developmental delays overcame them by age 3 (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1991).

**Outcome:** Children who participate in Parents as Teachers are healthier.

Results at age 3 showed that children in the Parents as Teachers group were much more likely to be fully immunized for their given age, and were less likely to be treated for injury in the previous year (Wagner, Iida & Spiker, 2001).

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## Goal #3: Prevent child abuse and neglect

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Parent educators using the Parents as Teachers curriculum provide parents with knowledge and more realistic expectations of age-appropriate developmental milestones and behaviors, information about parenting topics (e.g., discipline, sibling relationships, toilet learning), and ways that parents can support their children's development and learning.

**Outcome:** Parents are more knowledgeable about discipline, show more positive involvement with children, and organize their home environment more appropriately.

Results of a randomized trial in one urban community point to the potential of the Parents as Teachers program to prevent or reduce the incidence of child maltreatment among low-income adolescent parents. Researchers compared the effects of Parents as Teachers on teen mothers as compared to older mothers, and found that they showed greater improvement in knowledge of discipline and were more likely to report being

“very happy” in the previous year of taking care of their child. Teen mothers in the treatment group also improved their efforts to read aloud to their child, involve themselves in their child’s life, and organize their home environment in a more appropriate way. Overall, when compared to older mothers, Parents as Teachers had a stronger, positive impact on teenage mothers’ behaviors. This in turn resulted in stronger, positive impacts for the children of teenage mothers (Wagner, Iida & Spiker, 2001).

In another randomized trial, children of adolescent mothers who received Parents as Teachers services in combination with case management were less likely to be subjects of child abuse investigations than adolescent mothers in the control group who received neither Parents as Teachers nor case management (Wagner & Clayton, 1999).

**Outcome:** Families who participate in Parents as Teachers have fewer documented cases of abuse and neglect.

The “Second Wave” study examined how well the Parents as Teachers model program would transfer statewide. This study determined the impact of Parents as Teachers on 400 randomly-selected families enrolled in 37 diverse school districts across Missouri. There were only two documented cases of abuse and neglect among the 400 families over a three year period—significantly fewer than the state average. Parent knowledge of child development and parenting practices significantly increased for all types of families (Pfannenstiel, Lambson, & Yarnell, 1991).

“...the PAT program was highly effective in helping impoverished parents prepare their children to enter school.”

(Zigler, Pfannenstiel & Seitz, 2008, p.81)

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*Goal #4: Increase children’s school readiness and school success*

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The Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model provides personal visits, screenings, group meetings, and connection to a resource network designed to maximize the impact that parents have as their children’s first and most influential teachers. Because the early years of a child’s life are critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and life, working with parents of very young children is an opportunity to promote children’s readiness for school and sets children on the path for school success.

**Outcome:** Parents as Teachers children are more advanced than comparison children in language, problem solving and other cognitive abilities, and social development.

A randomized, control study performed in Cleveland, Ohio, found that 36-month-old children whose families were enrolled in Parents as Teachers for two years demonstrated higher mastery motivation. In other words, they were more persistent when asked to solve a moderately challenging problem, and were more likely to tackle the problem independently than children who were enrolled in another early childhood intervention program (used as a control). Parents as Teachers children were also found to have higher social skills ratings than children in the control program. In the same study, 24-month-old low-income children whose families were enrolled in Parents as Teachers performed significantly higher in a cognitive development task than low-income

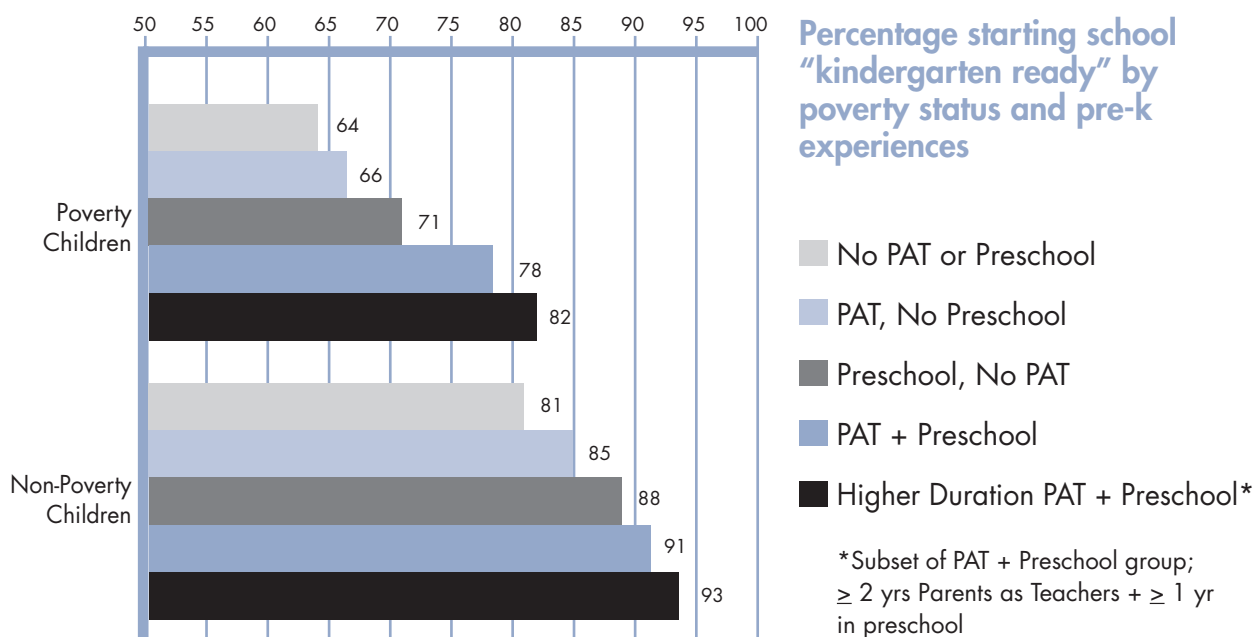
children in the control group (Drotar & Hurwitz, 2005; Drotar, Hurwitz, Jeavons, Kirchner, Schlucter, Sullivan, & Robinson, 2005).

Post-test assessments of children’s abilities at age 3 showed that on measures of intellectual achievement and language ability, Parents as Teachers children scored significantly higher than comparison children. Parents as Teachers children also demonstrated significantly more aspects of positive social development than did comparison children (Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1985; Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1989).

At age 3, Parents as Teachers children performed significantly above the national norms on a measure of school-related achievement, despite the fact that the Second Wave sample was over-represented on all traditional characteristics of risk. The average score for Parents as Teachers children was 106 as compared to the national norm of 100 (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1991).

**Outcome: Parents as Teachers children score higher on kindergarten readiness tests and on standardized measures of reading, math and language in the elementary grades.**

A replication and extension of the School Entry Assessment Project (Pfannenstiel, 1999; Pfannenstiel, Seitz, & Zigler, 2002) with 5,721 kindergarten children in Missouri, strongly supports the earlier result that children enrolled in Parents as Teachers together with preschool outperformed children without either experience in both kindergarten readiness and subsequent third grade achievement. Children who enrolled in both Parents as Teachers and preschool scored significantly higher than children without either experience on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Communication Arts achievement test in third grade. When poor children participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool for longer (two years or more in Parents as Teachers and one or more year of preschool), the achievement gap normally observed between poor children and more affluent children was virtually eliminated at kindergarten entry and continued to be narrowed in third grade (Zigler, Pfannenstiel & Seitz, 2008).





Parents as Teachers children scored significantly higher on standardized measures of reading and math at the end of first grade than did comparison children. In addition, teachers rated Parents as Teachers children's achievement progress higher than control group children's progress in all areas (Pfannenstiel, 1989).

Parents as Teachers children were rated by their teachers as performing at high levels of proficiency in all areas assessed. When compared to their grade-level peers, 91 percent of Parents as Teachers children were rated by their teachers as equal to or better than average. Overall, the relative level of achievement children demonstrated at age 3 on completion of the Parents as Teachers program was maintained at the end of the first/second grade (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1996).

Third graders who had received Parents as Teachers services with screening services from birth to age 3 scored significantly higher on standardized measures of achievement than their non-participating counterparts. Parents as Teachers children had a national percentile rank of 81, while non-participating students had a rank of 63 on the Stanford Achievement Test. Parents as Teachers graduates were less likely to receive remedial reading assistance or to be held back a grade in school. In fourth grade, Parents as Teachers graduates still scored significantly higher overall and on all Stanford Achievement subtests (reading, math, language, science, social studies) than did non-Parents as Teachers fourth-graders (Coates, 1994/1995).

Pre-kindergarten assessments showed that compared to matched comparisons, Parents as Teachers children had better language skills and were twice as likely to be reading-ready by kindergarten (Drazen & Haust, 1993).

Parents as Teachers children showed better school readiness at the start of kindergarten, higher reading and math readiness at the end of kindergarten, higher kindergarten grades, and fewer remedial education placements in first grade. Parents as Teachers children continued to perform better than non-Parents as Teachers children on standardized tests of reading and math achievement in second grade. Compared to non-Parents as Teachers children, Parents as Teachers children required half the rate of remedial and special education placements in third grade (Drazen & Haust, 1995; Drazen & Haust, 1996).

Upon entry to kindergarten, Parents as Teachers children scored significantly higher than children from the comparison groups on measures of language and self-help/social skills (Coleman, Rowland & Hutchins, 1997).

For all areas of development, teachers rated Parents as Teachers children higher, with five of the eight areas achieving statistical significance. Parents as Teachers children also had better attendance, with an average of 95 percent. Sixty-five percent of the Parents as Teachers third graders scored in the proficient or advanced categories of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) achievement test, as compared to 54 percent of the comparison group. More than one-fourth of the comparison group scored in the unsatisfactory range on the CSAP, while only 3 percent of the Parents as Teachers third graders scored in this range (O'Brien, Garnett & Proctor, 2002).



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## Parents as Teachers Quality Standards: An Essential Foundation for Achieving Outcomes

Research shows that positive outcomes are the result of interventions that are faithful to the model. Based on best practices used in the field of early childhood home visitation, Parents as Teachers National Center has developed standards and quality indicators that establish a blueprint for quality implementation of its *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model. Hundreds of program staff, state leaders, trainers and others in the field of early childhood education contributed to the development of the standards. The standards were field-tested on pilot sites across the country and were released in 2004.

Model fidelity is essential for demonstrating program impact.

The standards guide programs in both initial start-up and ongoing development of their program. Using the standards as their vehicle, program staff can confirm that they are delivering high-quality services and managing their program effectively.

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### *The Parents as Teachers Standards*

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The standards cover the four service delivery components of the Parents as Teachers model along with four additional areas of program implementation. Each of the eight areas of the standards is supported by a set of indicators that specify the criteria for quality implementation of the Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model. Together, the Parents as Teachers standards and quality indicators incorporate the flexibility needed for programs to effectively tailor the *Born to Learn*<sup>®</sup> model to the needs of their communities.

Parents as Teachers National Center has developed a summary statement that reflects the overall best practice for each particular area. These eight summary statements are referred to as the “Parents as Teachers Standards.”

#### Personal Visits

Personal visits support parents in their parenting role in order to promote optimal child development and positive parent-child interaction.

#### Group Meetings

Group meetings provide opportunities for parents to acquire information about child development, parenting and positive parent-child interaction, while gaining support from each other.

The standards provide clear guidelines for implementation and propel programs to even higher levels of excellence.

### Screening

Screening provides regular information about each child's health and developmental progress, increases parents' understanding of their child's development, and identifies strengths and abilities, as well as areas of concern.

### Resource Network

The program connects families to needed resources and takes an active role in the community, establishing ongoing relationships with other institutions and organizations that serve families.

### Recruitment and Retention

The program promotes its services in the community, recruits and promptly serves the maximum number of eligible families, and facilitates families' ongoing participation in services.

### Program Management

The program is carefully designed, well managed and efficiently operated, incorporating ongoing planning and review of program implementation.

### Professional Development

Staff development supports the professional growth of all staff and increases staff competence in delivering services to children and families.

### Evaluation

Record keeping and evaluation activities reflect the program's accountability for effective program implementation and outcomes for the children and families served.

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### *Program Self-Assessment*

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Program self-assessment guides a program in evaluating the degree to which it fulfills the Parents as Teachers standards and quality indicators. Self-assessment plays a critical role in providing useful, timely and meaningful information about how well a program is implemented. By completing the program self-assessment, parent educators increase their ability to provide optimal services to children and families in the community.

The self-assessment process helps programs:

- ✦ Increase collaboration, communication and learning among staff and community members
- ✦ Affirm and highlight program strengths
- ✦ Produce a manageable, high-quality plan to further strengthen services
- ✦ Demonstrate accountability and promote continuous quality improvement
- ✦ Contribute to each parent educator's annual re-certification
- ✦ Earn recognition from Parents as Teachers National Center

The dialogue that occurs among staff members as they evaluate their program's fulfillment of the quality indicators is a powerful learning experience. This dialogue results in lasting professional development for parent educators who strive to reinforce their initial training and gain additional knowledge about quality service delivery.

Programs that use the Parents as Teachers standards to take a closer look at quality can make significant strides in the pursuit of service excellence.

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*Commendation from Parents as Teachers National Center*

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Once programs complete the Parents as Teachers program self-assessment process, they are encouraged to apply for a Parents as Teachers Program Quality Visit. This visit helps programs receive recognition for their hard work and make their program even stronger.

During this visit, expert consultants with extensive experience in early childhood home visiting validate the program's self-study. This can result in the program receiving Parents as Teachers National Center commendation which can be used to demonstrate excellence and leverage support from funders, policy makers, the community and the families served. In addition, through their facilitation, the consultants provide guidance and technical assistance to help the program further strengthen its implementation of the Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn*® model.

For more information on how to apply or to request a Program Quality Visit application, contact Parents as Teachers National Center.

The self-assessment is the BEST investment of time and money a program could spend. It clearly helped us set an ongoing plan for the future.

—Parents as Teachers program coordinator

## Resources for Evaluation and Quality

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### Evaluation Resources

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#### Parents as Teachers *Born to Learn*® Logic Model \*

Summarizes the program's theory of change—the way in which services are intended to change the lives of children and families. It provides a simplified, visual description of how the *Born to Learn*® model is intended to work. Item S68

#### Program Evaluation Handbook \*

Provides guidance on how to measure program effectiveness and how to collect and use data. Designed specifically to help Parents as Teachers programs fulfill the Evaluation quality indicators. Item S69

#### Outcomes Measurement Toolkit

Helps identify instruments for use in the screening, assessment, and evaluation of young children and their parents. This online toolkit contains 83 measures of child and parent outcomes.

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### Quality Resources

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#### A Closer Look...The PAT Standards and Self-Assessment Package \*

This package of three books is an important resource for programs implementing the *Born to Learn*® model and for those providing funding, leadership, guidance, evaluation and technical assistance to these programs. A set of three books presents the standards, explains the six-step self-assessment process and provides a self-study workbook along with other useful tools for completing the self-assessment process. It is accompanied by a video introduction to the Parents as Teachers standards and self-assessment process and the CD Toolkit and Self-Study Workbook, which allows parent educators to fill out forms from *A Closer Look* electronically and save them as files on their computers. Item PKG67

#### Self-Assessment Orientation

Helps participants better understand how to implement the self-assessment process. The orientation is a distance education offering, allowing participants to take the course at a convenient location and time. Accessed through the PAT University at [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org).

#### QUEST

Enables programs to enter responses to questionnaires from *A Closer Look* completed by parents, staff, leadership council members and community collaborators. Once the information is entered, QUEST automatically tabulates and summarizes the questionnaire results. Staff members can use these summaries to help decide upon the ratings for the quality indicators. Accessed through the Parents as Teachers web portal.

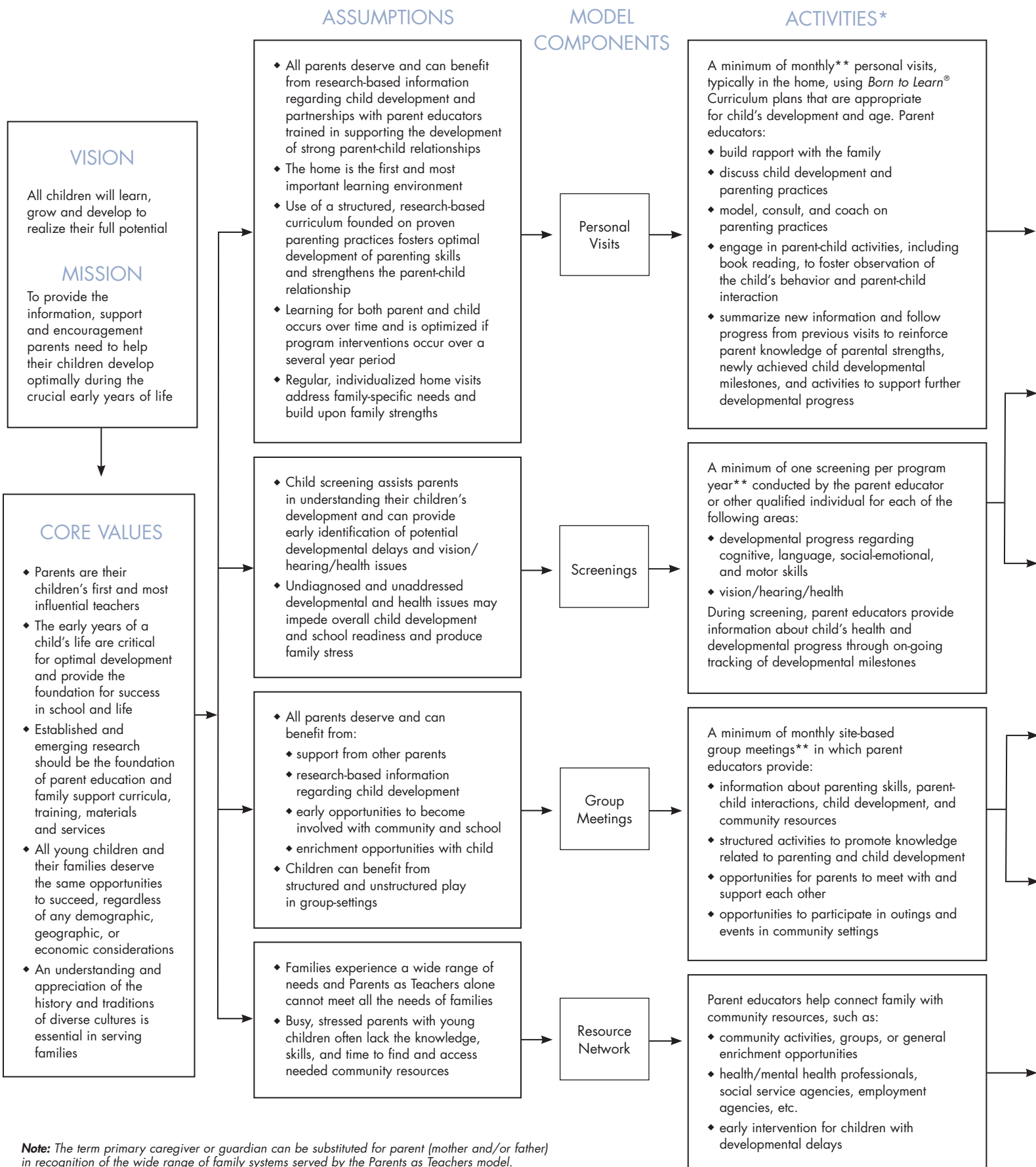
#### Online Self-Study Summary Tool

Allows programs that have completed their self-assessment to enter their ratings of the quality indicators and automatically receive user-friendly reports and graphs that summarize their program's performance. After programs enter their ratings, they receive via e-mail a personalized certificate of achievement from Parents as Teachers National Center. Accessed through the Parents as Teachers web portal.

\*—Available for purchase from the Parents as Teachers e-store.

—Available on the Parents as Teachers Web site.

# Born to Learn® logic model



**Note:** The term primary caregiver or guardian can be substituted for parent (mother and/or father) in recognition of the wide range of family systems served by the Parents as Teachers model.

\* Activities to be delivered in accordance with Parents as Teachers quality standards; and culturally responsive programming to be implemented based upon family and community needs.

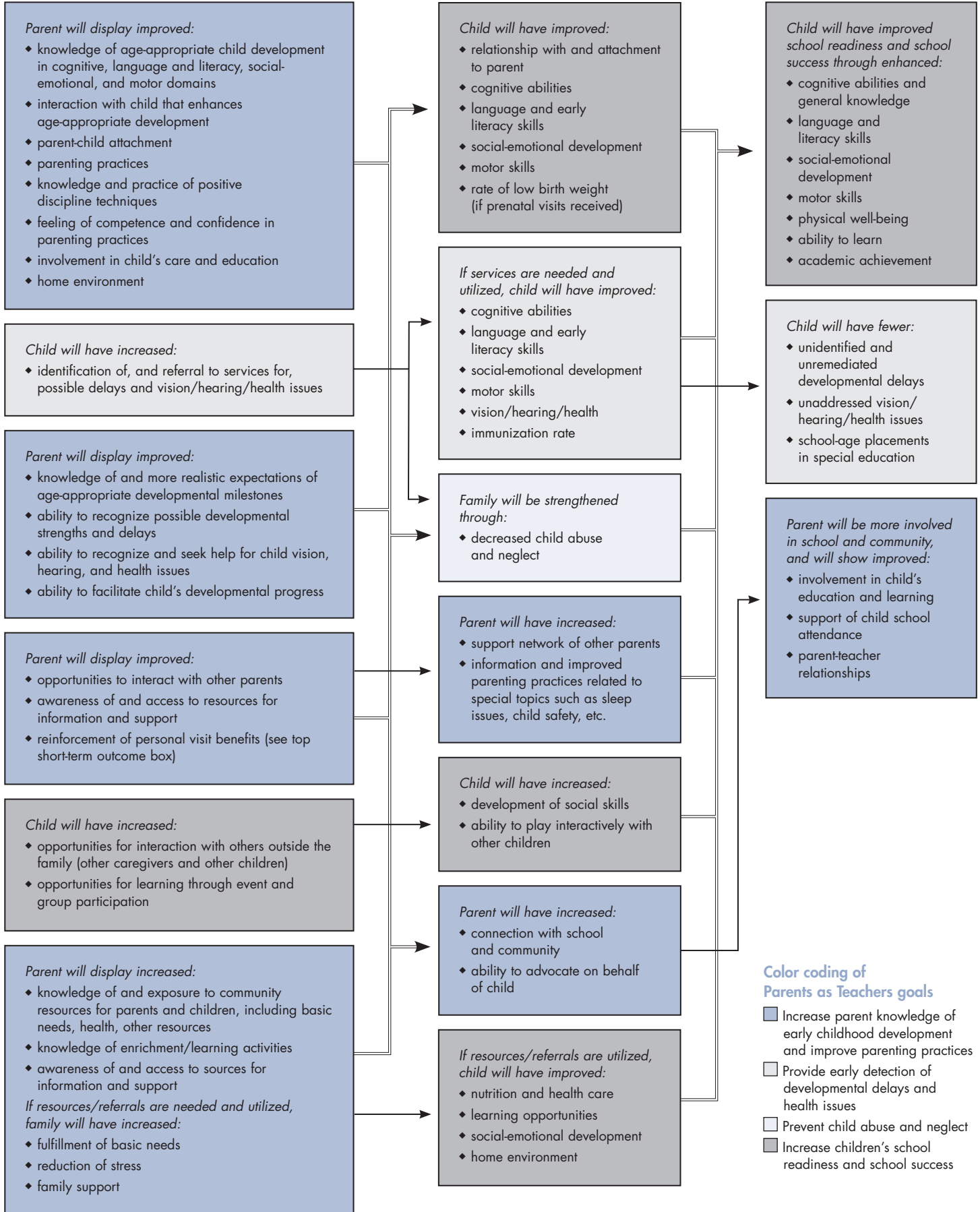
\*\* Current Parents as Teachers national standard. Increased intensity is recommended based upon family/community need.



## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES





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