



Good afternoon members of the Education Committee and interested parties. My name is Pam Langer and I have been involved with the Parents as Teachers program for over 20 years as a parent educator, supervisor, program coordinator and, for the last 12 years, State System Leader for the PAT National Center. Our state organization is ConnPAT and includes a training team which facilitates PATNC Institutes and workshops. We currently have a federal Parent Information and Resource Center grant which allows us to provide training, materials and technical support.

Parents as Teachers is an international parenting education and support program and curriculum for caregivers of children – providing services prenatally to kindergarten entry. They are research based and many evaluations have been conducted; by the National Center in St. Louis and by various programs across the United States and in other countries. Our own Dr. Edward Zigler will soon be releasing his study of PAT and its affects on school readiness. However, the real worth of the program is seen in the testimony of parents who are now more confident and competent in their roles and in the successes of the children, both in school and in life.

The main component of the PAT programs is the home visit (which may actually take place anywhere the parent is comfortable). Another component is the group meetings which have a dual purpose of providing opportunities for social interaction among children and developing social supports for the parents. This is enhanced by the resource component which provides information on whatever services the family needs. Our screening component includes both an annual Health Questionnaire and periodic developmental screenings. The PAT 2004-2005 Annual Program Report documented that 19% of children screened were identified with possible delays and that 86% of the children who were referred did qualify for intervention services. Often identifying and treating children this early can eliminate the need of providing special education services within the school system; these savings can cover the cost of the PAT program. The fact that 93% of PAT children are fully immunized at two years of age also demonstrates savings in the long run. Other results of this Report ( 80 of the 100 Connecticut rograms completed it) noted that of 2,597 families approximately one half of the families served were minority, over 70% had at least one high risk characteristic, 65% were linked to at least one community resource, 176 families were linked to Husky, and 61 were DCF referrals.

PAT programs are imbedded in many of the home visiting programs in Connecticut. It has been utilized by the Family Resource Center programs since their beginning in 1989, it is mandated for the Nurturing Families Network programs, and also used by Even Start, Early Head Start, Youth Service Bureaus, and many other services. Manchester and Windham have wonderful collaborations for their many programs who have affiliated PAT programs. Their parents move from one service to another as funding and family needs require without major disruption because they receive the same familiar materials from certified parent educators who all share the same Strength Model philosophy.

I'd like to leave you with one picture of the need for services in the home. Recently a consultant visited a classroom of two year olds for two hours. The environment was appropriate for this age group and for the needs of the children. The caregivers spoke both English and Spanish and modeled literacy skills. However, for the entire two hours not one word was spoken by any of the children! Despite being in an environment which encouraged their language development these children were so influenced by their home environment that they were not able to take advantage of these opportunities. A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of children in child care nation found that "a child's home environment has more influence on a child's development through age four and a half than does a child's experience in childcare." (<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/childcare>)

I strongly urge you to consider funding this request and provide more families with the information and support they need to ensure that their children develop as well as they possibly can – emotionally, socially, physically and cognitively.

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