



Soaring to Success
Through Books and Play...



**The Parent-Child
Home Program**
SINCE 1965

Date: December 19, 2008

From: Sarah E. Walzer, Executive Director, The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc.

To: Obama Transition Team

Re: Home Visiting: A Critical Tool for Reaching Parents and Preparing Families for School Success

For over 40 years, The Parent-Child Home Program has been successfully utilizing intensive home visiting to help families challenged by poverty, limited education, homelessness, recent immigration, and literacy and language-barriers to prepare their children to enter school ready to be successful students. The Parent-Child Home Program bridges the achievement gap for low-income families. Program graduates go on to complete high school and achieve academically at levels equal to their middle-class peers. We are delighted that President-elect Obama has identified home visiting as an important component of his early childhood, school readiness strategy. Most importantly, we are pleased to hear the incoming Administration speak to the critical role of parents in preparing their children for school success and supporting them throughout their academic careers.

Since 1965, The Parent-Child Home Program has focused on working one-on-one with parents to provide them with the skills to be their children's first and most important teachers and to prepare them to be their children's academic advocates throughout school. We know that children whose parents are involved in their education are much more likely to be successful in school and that parent involvement is most powerful when it begins well before the child enters school. We applaud the President-elect's focus on the importance of parents and look forward to seeing these concepts reflected in the early childhood initiatives coming from the administration and in its review of revisions to *No Child Left Behind*.

The Parent-Child Home Program increases positive parent-child interaction and the nurturing relationships crucial to children's development. Through the process of reading, playing and talking with their children, parents create a language-rich home environment that promotes language development, literacy, and school success. Dozen of studies demonstrate that Program is highly effective at preparing young children from low-income families for school success and has a lasting impact throughout their school years:

- ★ In a 1998 study, Program participants **graduated from high school at the rate of middle-class students, 30% higher than the randomized control group and 20% higher rate than other students from low-income families nationally.**
- ★ **93%** of Program graduates passed the first grade skills assessment in South Carolina, compared to **74%** of their socio-economic (free-lunch-eligible) peers.



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- ★ A 2003 NYU study concluded that the Program successfully **bridges the achievement gap**, preparing non-native English-speaking children to enter school as ready to learn as their more advantaged, English-speaking peers.
- ★ Program parents' **verbal interaction** with their children was found to be **50%** higher than a randomized control group of non-program families.
- ★ This increased **parent-child interaction** corresponded with children's subsequent **higher scores** on school-readiness measures, both cognitive and social-emotional.
- ★ Lasting increases in IQ scores were found compared to a randomized control group of children who did not receive program services.

The Parent-Child Home Program's intensive home visiting model reaches families facing significant obstacles to school readiness and academic success, including: poverty, limited access to center-based services, geographic isolation, language barriers, limited parental education, and low literacy levels. The Program works successfully with a diverse group of families: two-parent, single parent, teen parent, foster parent, urban, rural, and suburban, immigrant/non-native English-speaking, and homeless families. The Program also works effectively with grandparent raising grandchildren and single fathers.

The Parent-Child Home Program is currently being replicated in over 150 communities in 15 states and serves over 6,000 families a year. As a research-based replication model, all sites provide exactly the same services, twice-weekly visits over a two year period to families with two- and three-year-old children. The Parent-Child Home Program partners with a wide range of local organizations to implement the model. These local partners include school districts, charter schools, family resource centers, community health centers, social service agencies, public libraries, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations. Sites are funded with state and county early childhood funds in New York, Illinois, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida and California. In both Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, the Program has had a line item in the state budget for over five years. Clusters of sites in New York City and Seattle are funded respectively by the Robin Hood Foundation and the Business Partnership for Early Learning (annual report attached).

One of the most critical aspects of high quality, cost-effective home visiting models is training and quality assurance. Decades of research and evaluation support the training, technical assistance, and replication systems that have been put in place by The Parent-Child Home Program. Each replication site is:

- ★ Directed by a Coordinator who is trained by The Parent-Child Home Program's national center. The coordinators are the professional staff members, most often certified early childhood teachers or social workers, but also nurses, school administrators, and speech therapists.
- ★ Staffed by Home Visitors who are hired locally. Prior to beginning home visits, they receive 16 hours of training. They then receive at least 2 hours of weekly training and supervisory support from the site Coordinator.



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- ★ Certified by the national center as an authentic replication of the model, after at least two years of operation, and monitored through a web-based management information system, regular reporting, and site visits.

Approximately 30-50% of our Home Visitors initially participated in the Program as parents. For many, this job is an entry into the workforce or an improvement in their employment status. In addition to the multi-generational impact of enabling children to enter school prepared to be successful, the Program can also have an immediate impact on families' quality of life by being a source of employment for parents.

What the Experts Say about The Parent-Child Home Program and Home Visiting:

“The Parent-Child Home Program is the most cost-effective, proven initiative available today preparing at-risk children and their families for success in school. The success of the Program is best documented in Pittsfield, MA, where they’ve had it for over 28 years, and a 1998 study demonstrated that 84% of the Parent-Child Home Program children, all of them at-risk children, graduated high school.”

Dr. John Silber, President Emeritus Boston University & Former Chair MA Board of Education

“Thirty years of research demonstrates that The Parent-Child Home Program plays an important role in improving school success and high school graduation rates among at-risk children.”

The Honorable Estelle B. Richman, Secretary of Public Welfare, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

“The most important part of the Program is that parents are given the tools that allow them to be effective teachers for their children. This means that after the program is over, the parents are still in a position to enhance their children’s development.”

Dr. LaRue Allen, Professor of Applied Psychology, Steinhardt School of Education & Director of the Child and Family Policy Center, New York University

“The Parent-Child Home Program arguably has the best cost-benefit ratio of any literacy intervention program. Its years of data demonstrate that it actually changes parental behaviors with excellent outcomes, prompting parents to increase verbal exchange and foster language development in their children.”

Dr. Todd Risley, Co-author, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children



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Legislative Recommendations for the first 100 Days:

1) The Parent-Child Home Program recommends that the Obama–Biden Administration include the *Education Begins at Home Act* as a key component of the administration’s Early Childhood agenda (S. 667/HR. 2343 in the 110th Congress).

As noted above, high quality, evidence-based home visiting services are a critical component of any initiative to prepare children and their parents for school success. Despite the proven, long-term results of home visiting, there is currently no federal funding stream to ensure that families have access to this needed service. The *Education Begins at Home Act* would establish a dedicated federal funding stream to support high quality, voluntary home visiting programs for families across the country. The legislation would enable states to implement the array of evidence-based home visiting programs that meet the needs of the families in their state. With strong bipartisan and bicameral support in the 110th Congress, including from both then-Senators Obama and Biden, this legislation is poised for speedy enactment and would be an immediate and powerful statement from the Administration as to the importance of supporting and preparing parents to become actively engaged in their children’s education. In addition, the home visiting programs supported by this legislation would enable states to create the continuum of services, sequencing home visiting services and center-based programming including Early Head Start, Head Start, and pre-k, that is vital to ensuring that the most high-risk families are able to prepare their children for school success.

2) The Parent-Child Home Program recommends that the Obama–Biden Administration highlight the importance of **support for early childhood programming** when reviewing *No Child Left Behind* and considering increases in Title I funding.

As has been well-documented by the Center for Law and Social Policy (see attached report), school districts across the country have effectively used Title I ones to provide quality early childhood education programming, including The Parent-Child Home Program, to low-income children. These districts recognize that the key to ensuring that no child is left behind is ensuring that no child starts behind. The early childhood programming funded with Title I funds has clearly demonstrated the value of these services. The Parent-Child Home Program site highlighted in the CLASP report is a model for the value of two years of home visiting followed by a year in pre-k. The low-income children who completed that sequence entered school developmentally ahead not just of other Title I eligible children who did not have this sequence of services but of all children in the district. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of *No Child Left Behind* has been that districts, struggling to meet the requirements under the law, have been forced to withdraw funds from these cost-effective prevention programs in order to spend the dollars on remedial programming after children enter school. We urge the incoming administration to ensure that revisions to Title I/*No Child Left Behind* support districts in funding cost-effective, early childhood programming that is proven to prepare children to enter school ready to be there and ready to be successful students.

Thank you so much for your interest in and support for home visiting and early childhood education. We would be pleased to provide any additional information and answer any



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questions. For more information, please contact: Sarah Walzer, Executive Director, The Parent-Child Home Program, at 516-883-7480 or swalzer@parent-child.org

Thank you so much for your support for early childhood programming and home visiting.

Very truly yours,

Sarah E. Walzer

Sarah E. Walzer
Executive Director