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Human Services
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Parents as Teachers®

Testimony before the
New York State
Joint Fiscal Committees
SFY 2017-2018 State Budget
Human Services Budget Hearing
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Testimony Submitted by:

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Parents as Teachers would like to thank the chairs and members of the committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the 2017-2018 New York State Budget. My name is Lisa Foehner. I work for the Parents as Teachers national office and support Parents as Teachers Affiliate programs in New York.

Parents as Teachers is a nationally recognized voluntary, evidenced-based early childhood home visiting model that promotes the optimal early development, learning and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. Parents as Teachers is the most widely replicated home visiting model in the country serving families in all 50 states and in 110 tribal communities. In New York, 10 community based organizations provide the Parents as Teachers model including Broome, Chautauqua, Monroe, Herkimer, Rockland, Steuben, Tioga, Yates and Westchester serving 1,074 families in 2015-16. The first Parents as Teachers site in New York launched in 1986 in the Binghamton City School District. In 14 other locations, other home visiting models partner with Parents as Teachers for exclusive access to our research based home visiting curriculum. Parents as Teachers programs have been operating in New York for decades with no designated state funding. **Additional funding is needed to reduce waiting lists in key communities.**

This year we respectfully request \$491,000 in the 2017-18 budget to expand Parents as Teachers services to families in Broome, Chautauqua, and Westchester counties where programs currently carry waiting lists and a majority of children who could benefit from home visiting do not have access to the services.ⁱ The new funding would support services for an additional 120 families and provide for a local, quasi-experimental outcomes study. The total commitment for this project over three years is \$1.4M.

The premise of Parents as Teachers is simple. Trained parent educators, who are often early childhood educators, social workers, nurses or other trained professionals, work through local schools, hospitals, or other agencies to strengthen families.

The model includes four components: personal visits; child screenings; a resource network; and group connections. Personal visits are individualized, strength-based visits where parent educators focus on child development and parent-child interaction, and empower parents to interact with their children in a way that facilitates healthy development. The screening portion of the program helps parents identify possible developmental, and other health problems so that children can be linked to appropriate services and therapies. In some cases, Parents as Teachers is the first link between an infant or child and the State's Early Intervention program. Parents as Teachers programs also offer a strong community resource network bridging the gap between resources available and families' needs. Group meetings allow enrolled parents to meet with other parents as a support group, allowing them to practice parenting skills and build a strong family-community connection. Every personal visit includes a focus on family well-being so parent educators help parents set family goals in areas such as finding employment, or getting a better education to help increase family self-sufficiency and independence.

Parents as Teachers is an essential component to the state's home visiting system because Parents as Teachers bridges a gap. Most home visiting programs in New York limit enrollment to first time pregnant moms in the early stages of pregnancy, or to parents in the first few months of life--leaving a large gap in services for families with multiple children or families with children who are toddler through Kindergarten age. Parents as Teachers has a core value of working with moms and dads, prenatally all the way through their children's first year of Kindergarten, including families with multiple children. Enrollment can happen at any time along this continuum. This is a unique quality to Parents as Teachers.

Parents as Teachers also addresses individual family needs and is adaptable to various target geographic, demographic and family risk factors. For example, Parents as Teachers programs can tailor enrollment to meet the needs of their community, targeting families who live in poverty, medically fragile children, teens, veteran and military families, homeless and transitional parents, as well as parents with a disability or those in treatment of alcohol or substance abuse. Seventy percent of families in Parents as Teachers in New York have two to four high needs characteristics. Twenty percent of our parent educators are bilingual and in some communities, such as Mt. Kisko, in Westchester, personal visits are offered in Spanish. Additionally, our curriculum's parent facing materials are offered in Spanish, which is also unique to Parents as Teachers. We meet families where they are.

Parents as Teachers is a proven and well-researched strategy for reducing the need for remedial education, increasing school readiness, reducing instances of child abuse and neglect, promoting family economic self-sufficiency, and parent involvement in their children's care and education. The model also meets the evidence-based criteria of the federally funded Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and has been selected by 35 states to be replicated through that initiative.

Outcomes include:

- children in PAT in the Jamestown School District demonstrated that children had higher scores on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment at kindergarten enrollment than peers who did not access PAT.ⁱⁱ

- children in PAT in the Binghamton City School District required half the rate of remedial and special education placements in the 3rd grade as those who were not. ⁱⁱⁱ
- improved language and literacy for young and school age children
- increased entire family engagement in children's learning and engagement with their schools
- increased school achievement for children
- identification and treatment of developmental delays well before the K-12 years
- improved parenting knowledge and skills
- reduced child maltreatment
- increased family self-sufficiency
- child health outcomes, such as:
 - increased child immunization rates
 - lower body mass index rates
 - higher birth weights
 - improved family well-being
 - increased family health literacy

Strong community partnership is essential for success to serve more families. The local implementing agencies looking to expand services are: Binghamton City School District, Jamestown Community Learning Council and Bedford Central School District in partnership with Neighbor's Link of Northern Westchester. These community partners have selected Parents as Teachers for good reason--Parents as Teachers is a wise, long-term investment.

One state institute for public policy issued a list of evidence based programs to policymakers and budget writers that are well-researched and that can with a high degree of certainty, lead to better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Policy analysts found that **Parents as Teachers has a cost benefit ratio of \$3.39—it saves taxpayers money.** ^{iv}

In order to move New York toward a robust voluntary early childhood home visiting system, we need funding and infrastructure that enhances and supports existing evidence-based home visiting programs and systems. This can be done by providing opportunities for local and state stakeholders to partner with one another and coordinate a continuum of early childhood home visiting services that can address a wide range of family needs and achieve results that save money.

Many experts suggest that home visiting program diversity that offers parents with choices and ensures that programs are well matched with local needs and strengths is the best approach for communities. Each program has differing goals and continuum of families served, a multi-model approach would better meet the needs of New York communities. Program models may vary in design, eligibility criteria, content or intensity, so a range of individual home visiting program models is more reflective of the broad spectrum of family needs that home visiting can impact.

Therefore, in addition, to our request for a total of \$491,000 for Parents as Teachers, we also support our other home visiting colleagues in a joint request so that more vulnerable families can receive access to these services. We ask that the state maintain the \$26.8 million investment in home visiting programs in New York and add an additional \$9.5 million (\$4.5M for Healthy Families New

York, \$2.5M for Nurse Family Partnership and \$2M for Parent Child Home Program in the 17-18 state budget.

Evidence-based home visiting—by Parents as Teachers and other national models—is a huge success story in New York. Expanding and enhancing home visiting is a strategic opportunity to strengthen families and ensure that from birth to school, children grow up healthy, safe and ready to learn. I sincerely hope that you will consider continuing to build on a system of quality evidence-based home visiting programs that meets the needs of more families.

For your information and for the record, I have attached two success stories from families in New York, and request they be included in the hearing record. The stories are from:

- Bedford Central School District
- Binghamton School District

For more information about Parents as Teachers, please contact Lisa Foehner, Director of State Advocacy at lisa.foehner@parentsasteachers.org.

Thank you.

ⁱ Schuyler Center for Advocacy & Analysis. [Home Visiting Need New York State. \(2016\)](#)

ⁱⁱ Kazi, Mansoor Realist Evaluation in Jamestown Public Schools: Utilizing 100% Sample Data from Schools, Mental Health and Other Services in Continuous Evaluation of What Works and For Whom. Keynote Presented 2016 Chautauqua System of Care Meeting, Chautauqua Institution, NY (2016).

ⁱⁱⁱ Drazen, S., & Haust, M. (1995). The effects of the Parents and Children Together (PACT) program on school achievement. Binghamton, NY: Community Resource Center. Drazen, S. & Haust, M. (1996, August). Lasting academic gains from an early home visitation program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

^{iv} A Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) report entitled "Return on Investment: Evidence-based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes," found that Parents as Teachers has a benefit to cost ratio of \$3.39. The Washington State legislature has directed WSIPP to identify "evidence-based" policies. The goal is to provide Washington policymakers and budget writers with a list of well-researched public policies that can, with a high degree of certainty, lead to better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The summary report information can be found here: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/118> Programs are searchable by name.



Parents as Teachers®

Binghamton City School District

Leslie Miller, RN, is in her last semester of Binghamton University to complete her Bachelor of Science in nursing. Leslie hopes to seek a career as a nurse with an emphasis in community health.

"Having a baby is supposed to be the most joyful, exciting time in a mother's life. But as I welcomed my second child – my beautiful son, Cayden – I felt like I was drowning.



Cayden had multiple rare health conditions that required appointments with neurologists, endocrinologists, developmental pediatricians, and others. I didn't have anyone to help me cope with having a baby with such severe medical conditions while also raising another child on my own. I suffered from post-partum depression after Cayden's birth. I felt so overwhelmed and alone.

But it turned out I wasn't alone. By enrolling in Parents as Teachers through Binghamton City School District, I began receiving visits from a trained parent educator, Mary Ellen, twice a month from Cayden's birth until he turned six. As a mother, I felt empowered to have a professional I could ask questions of and get advice from; someone I could trust with questions about my children's development and health.

I was very nervous about having a baby with such serious health issues and I wanted to make sure I understood how to assess his developmental growth. Mary Ellen nurtured my confidence by focusing on my strengths and what I was doing right – not critiquing what I was doing wrong – and I felt like a more successful parent.

Mary Ellen also connected me to community services throughout my son's first six years. I knew just who to call for support and advice when Cayden required evaluations or had problems in school. Parents as Teachers inspired me to be my best. My parent educator didn't give me the answers but led me through a thoughtful process of problem solving.

I can tell you firsthand that evidence-based home visiting is a very effective way to increase parent knowledge of their child's development, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and help get kids ready for school.

By empowering parents with strong parenting skills, we can ensure the next generation is prepared to be successful in school, career, and life - just like Cayden."



Parents as Teachers®

Bedford Central School District & Neighbors Link



Parents as Teachers a collaboration between Bedford Central School District (BCSD) and Neighbors Link, located in Westchester, New York, serves the communities of Mount Kisco and Bedford Hills. BCSD truly values the impact of improving child health and learning outcomes.

"One component of the Parents as Teachers evidence-based home visiting model is to provide annual health and developmental screenings to help parents identify possible

delays," says Danielle Levin, the school district's Preschool Coordinator. "Research shows the earlier we detect delays and connect families to services, the more likely children will be ready for school. This year alone, Parents as Teachers programs across the state of New York screened more than 1,100 children."

When "Nelinda," a trained parent educator, first met "Sylvia" and her 14 month-old son "Lorenzo," the mom was overwhelmed, exhausted and depressed. She described her toddler as having inconsistent sleep patterns, difficulty interacting with others, delayed language skills, and difficulty understanding and responding to others' emotions like affection and anger. Sylvia also told her parent educator she couldn't take her eyes off of her son because she constantly feared for his safety.

During one of the first visits with the family, Nelinda conducted an initial developmental screening on Lorenzo. Over the next several weeks, she also connected Sylvia to the Westchester County Early Intervention psychologist for additional evaluations and services for Lorenzo. As a result of these additional evaluations, Lorenzo was diagnosed with autism. Fortunately, through early intervention, Lorenzo received intensive services that addressed his special needs.

Over the next two years, Lorenzo made steady progress; he learned to talk and his behavior improved dramatically. Sylvia and Lorenzo were also supported along the way with regular visits from Nelinda which Sylvia participated in eagerly. She learned about Lorenzo's development and received information and support specific to his needs around potty training and social interactions. Sylvia also learned strategies to make parent-child activities more appropriate and impactful for Lorenzo's needs.

Their family progress was so successful that Sylvia was invited to share their success story at a parent support group for parents of children with autism. When Lorenzo graduated from Parents as Teachers last spring, Sylvia told Nelinda, "You showed me the road, and I took the journey!" reinforcing one of Parents as Teachers' core values: that parents are their child's most influential teachers.