

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Beyond the Satisfaction Survey: Moving from Gathering Feedback to Partnering with Family Leaders

Many family support programs survey participants to gauge satisfaction with services. Data gathered are useful to make changes to programs and collect information about how services have impacted families. Family support programs that are strengths based are often already asking caregivers about their strengths and needs to guide individual supports. However, as noted by Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), “agencies and systems often select engagement strategies targeted to one aspect of families’ experiences—for example, recognizing and responding to developmental milestones—but stop short of sharing decision making

or leadership with parents.”¹ Family members have funds of knowledge, connections in the community, and valuable perspectives. When provided the opportunity, family members can use existing skills and develop skills that contribute to program success. How do we go from engaging families in programming to sharing power with family leaders?

Assessing where a program is on the continuum of engaging parents as leaders can help to create a roadmap for increased shared decision making. There are many family engagement frameworks and assessment tools available that help programs determine

their strengths and opportunities to grow in this work including: [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#), [Family Engagement Toolkit from Trying Together](#), and [Office of Head Start](#).

CSSP has developed a self-assessment tool that builds on the concept of a changed relationship with parents championed by the Strengthening Families™ approach and incorporates concepts from both the [Manifesto for Race Equity & Parent Leadership in Early Childhood Systems](#) and the report, [Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems](#). The goal of the

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[Parent Engagement and Leadership Assessment Guide and Toolkit](#) is

“to support agencies and systems to integrate parents as partners, leaders, and advocates across all agency programs and operations.”² The tool is organized into four pillars: family-centered, equity-driven, collaborative, and transparent. Tool users can assess their level of commitment, capacity, practice, and influence in each area. Using the tool can spur programs to think deeply about how they define family engagement and to be more intentional about incorporating parents as leaders.

Shifting to strengthening a process that values and engages caregivers as decision makers and leaders takes intentionality and commitment. Christina Espinoza of Quality Start Los Angeles outlines [four phases](#) that

explore how programs can “tap into the voices and strengths of the families we work [with] to simultaneously improve our program quality and bolster relationships with families.”³ Phases include gathering data from families, ensuring that families have different ways to become involved and reducing barriers to participation, sharing results with families, and considering how to assess the quality and sustain family engagement initiatives. The many examples shared in the article will help programs think intentionally about how to chart a roadmap for including families as leaders in their programs.

Where is your program on this journey? How have you intentionally incorporated family members as decision makers in your work? Please reach out to your implementation support staff to share your story of parent leadership!

Sources

- 1 Center for the Study of Social Policy (2019). Parent engagement & leadership assessment guide and toolkit. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Parent-Engagement-and-Leadership-Assessment-Guide-and-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Espinoza, C. (n.d.). Family partnerships I: Gathering family feedback for stronger programs. Retrieved from: <https://qualitystartla.org/family-partnerships-i-gathering-family-feedback-stronger-programs/>



PENNSYLVANIA Parents as Teachers®

Welcome to our monthly article to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Pennsylvania PAT. This month we will focus our efforts on resilience.

Here is a research article that you may find helpful in understanding the connection between PAT and resilience.

Multilevel Interaction Effects of Family and Community Factors on Mothers' Engagement in Evidence-Based Home Visiting

Summary: This study published in the July/September 2019 issue of Family and Community Health of approximately 2,400 mothers used ecological and family system frameworks to evaluate the relationship between family- and community-level factors, and their cross-level interactions, with evidence-based home visiting program participation.

[Read study >>](#)

Family Support Webinar

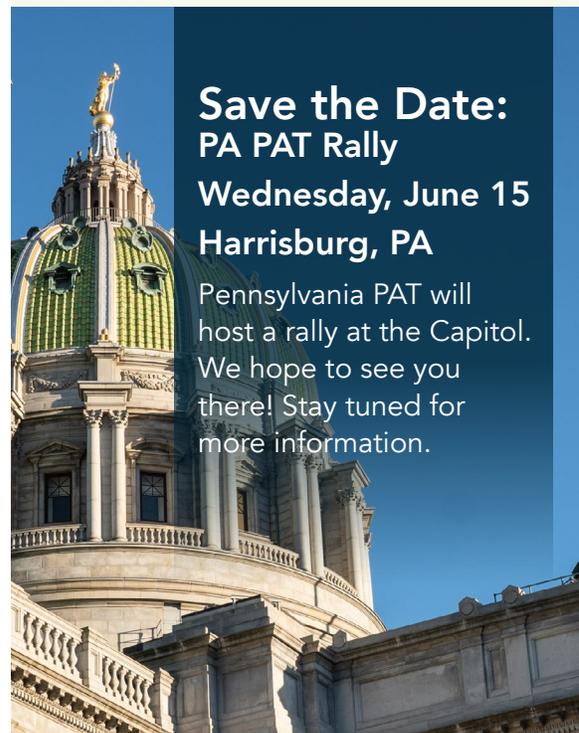
Strengthening Families™: Building your Toolkit

Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 10 a.m. 11:15 a.m. ET

Looking to refresh your resources related to the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework? Join this webinar to learn about updated resources, activity ideas, and more that will support you to create environments where families build protective factors. You will strengthen your understanding of this approach by exploring related efforts and have a chance to share your ideas!

Presenter: Rijelle Kraft, Family Support Managing Coordinator, Center for Schools and Communities

[Register for webinar >>](#)



Save the Date:
PA PAT Rally
Wednesday, June 15
Harrisburg, PA

Pennsylvania PAT will host a rally at the Capitol. We hope to see you there! Stay tuned for more information.

Success Story from the Field

The Guidance Center, DuBois, Pennsylvania

“Visit Kit Project”

Although in-person Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visits have resumed, there continue to be families experiencing COVID-19 and other respiratory or flu symptoms who need to unexpectedly cancel an in-person visit. The Guidance Center PAT staff developed Visit Kits for these unexpected in-person visit cancellations. PAT staff offer an emergency Visit Kit to families to keep on hand in case they need to cancel an in-person home visit due to illness. The kits include an activity page, parent handouts, material provided by the parent educator, a list of what the family will need for the activity, and instructions.

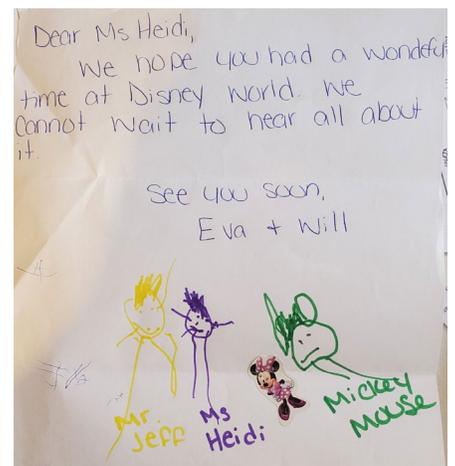
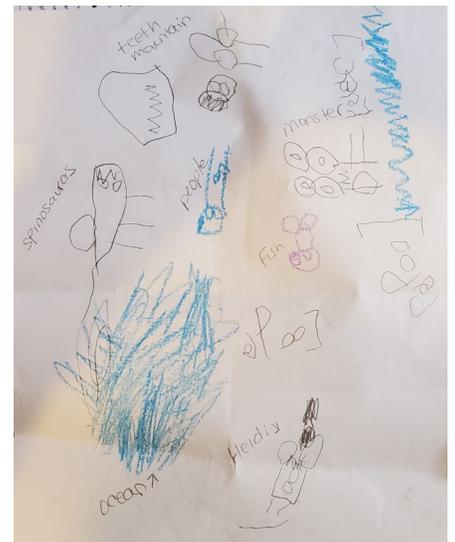
The Visit Kit makes it possible for parents to complete an activity with their child(ren) and complete an activity page. The parent educator then sets up a virtual visit with the family to discuss how the Visit Kit was used and how the activity went for the parent and child.

Activity Page-You’ve Got Mail: Writing and Understanding Parts of a Letter

Families were given a stamp and envelope addressed to the home visitor. Parents helped their child write a message or draw a picture, then address and affix the stamp to the envelope. Parents were then encouraged to take their child to their mailbox or local post office. Parents could talk about their local post office, their mailperson, and the mailing process. After the home visitor received letters from the children, the home visitor sent a card in return. Each child received their own card in the mail, addressed to them. Each card contained a coupon for the child to give to their home visitor for a book of their choice during their next visit. Parents reported that their child was excited to see their name on their own piece of mail and are now looking forward to using their coupon to pick out their own book.



Child with her mail from her home visitor.



Examples of letters received from the children.

Share Your Story

Do you have some success stories or program news that you would like to share in future News Briefs? If so, please email [the Family Support team](#) or join us online at the [Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Facebook](#) page or at the [Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Facebook](#) page.

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational 2: 3 Years Through Kindergarten

Monday, May 23 – Friday, May 27
Monday, June 20 – Friday, June 24

Foundational and Model Implementation

For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs

Monday, May 9 – Friday, May 20
Monday, June 6 – Friday, June 17

Register for courses at the National Parents as Teachers' [training website](#).

If you have any questions regarding registration for PAT trainings, please contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).



Family Support Team

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children's Trust Fund grantees and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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Safe Kids Corner



Falls

From the moment your baby starts to crawl, the world is a magical place filled with new adventures and discoveries. From a child's perspective, everything is a potential mountain to climb (that giant bookshelf), obstacle to overcome (those pesky stairs), or mysterious place to investigate (anywhere beyond the safety gate). Little bumps will happen but we're here to help so these brave expeditions don't result in something more serious.

The Hard Facts

Unintentional falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries for children in the United States. In 2013, unintentional falls resulted in nearly 2,578,235 injuries requiring treatment in an emergency room. These injuries resulted from activities such as climbing on furniture, playing near an unsecured window, falling down stairs or playing on playgrounds.

Top Tips

1. Screens are meant to keep bugs out, not children in. Properly install window guards to prevent unintentional window falls. For windows above the first floor, include an emergency release device in case of fire.
2. Keep babies and young kids strapped in when using highchairs, infant carriers, swings, or strollers. When placing your baby into a carrier, remember to place the carrier on the floor, not on top of a table or other furniture.
3. Use approved safety gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs and attach them to the wall, if possible. Remember to read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels to make sure you have the right gate for your needs. Not all gates are safe for use at the top of stairs.
4. Secure **TVs and furniture** to the wall using mounts, brackets, braces, anchors, or wall straps to prevent tip-overs. **These kinds of accidents happen more than you might think**, so take a few minutes, secure your TV and furniture, and then never worry about it again.
5. Take your kids to **playgrounds** with shock-absorbing surfaces such as rubber, synthetic turf, sand, pea gravel, wood chips, or mulch. If your child falls, the landing will be more cushioned than on asphalt, concrete, grass, or dirt.

Source: [Safe Kids Worldwide](#)