



Future Research Directions for the Parents as Teachers Program: Final Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Parents as Teachers National Center (PATNC) has released the final report of the Scientific Advisory Committee, an independent group commissioned by the Board of Directors to recommend future research directions on the Parents as Teachers program. The report seeks to build on and extend an impressive record of PAT program research. Funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Scientific Advisory Committee was comprised of leading researchers¹ in the fields of early childhood, parent education, family support, and child abuse prevention.

Scientific Advisory Committee Recommendations

The committee concluded that *PATNC is well-positioned to move to a new level of research activity that contributes to both continuous improvements in program quality and to the understanding of how home visiting programs influence young children and their parents.* The report recommended research directions in three major areas: research on program outcomes; research on program implementation; and strategies for increasing PATNC's capacity to promote and support research. Specifically, the committee recommended that PATNC:

- **Develop a well-focused conceptual framework (logic model) to guide research** and use the opportunity to refine the eight current PAT program goals.
- **Measure outcomes in four key areas:** parent knowledge and practices, prevention of child abuse and neglect, early detection of possible developmental delays, and school readiness and school success.
- **Use an experimental design in future outcome research**, and in situations where random assignment is not feasible, employ the strongest possible quasi-experimental designs.
- **Study the effects of PAT with at risk children**, and in particular, how differences in intensity and duration of the PAT program and the use of PAT in combination with other services impact outcomes for children.
- **Collect implementation data** on service delivery, participant characteristics, and staffing and supervision.
- **Provide leadership for PAT programs by continuing to be evaluation driven** and helping local programs strengthen evaluation capacities.

Parents as Teachers National Center: Next Steps

The Scientific Advisory Committee Report is being integrated into all aspects of PATNC's work. Over the coming months, staff and Board will develop priorities and an action plan in response to the report. Immediate steps in response to the recommendations include:

- **Development of a logic model and refinement of program goals** -- the committee's recommendations on the logic model and the refinement of PAT goals have been implemented together.
- **Providing local programs with tools to improve program quality and evaluation** -- the PAT Quality Standards and Self-Assessment Guide will be released in January 2004 and additional resources for local program evaluation are currently in development.
- **Actively seeking partnerships and funding** -- PATNC is exploring partnerships to conduct large-scale, experimental design studies to further analyze existing data on PAT and to identify PAT programs of excellence.

For a complete copy of the Scientific Advisory Committee Report, go to www.patnc.org/researchevaluation.asp.

¹ The committee members included: Donna Bryant, Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Linda M. Espinosa, Ph.D., University of Missouri, Columbia; Karen A. Guskin, Ph.D., Parents as Teachers National Center; Brenda Jones Harden, Ph.D., University of Maryland; Douglas R. Powell, Ph.D., Purdue University (Chair); Arthur J. Reynolds, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, Madison; Susan S. Stepleton, L.C.S.W., Parents as Teachers National Center; Penelope K. Trickett, Ph.D., University of Southern California; Barbara Hanna Wasik, Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.