

Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony to provide information about Parents as Teachers (PAT) in Kansas. Legislators have received a great deal of information about the benefits of Parents as Teachers in Kansas. This testimony is to provide you with information about what it takes to produce the benefits and make the impacts: the PAT Parent Educators.

I started with Parents as Teachers in 1993 with Keystone PAT serving families in the Perry/Lecompton area. I have been the Coordinator of the program for 10 years. I currently supervise 18 extraordinary and dedicated women who work as Parent Educators serving over 400 families in 17 School Districts in Northeast Kansas.

These Parent Educators' day can begin as soon as they wake with a text message, email, or phone call from a parent. They work throughout the day:

- Preparing for home visits
- Finding needed resources for parents
- Driving up to 45 minutes often on gravel roads to home visits
- Answering questions from parents at the visit or on their phones
- Planning a group connection
- Talking with a new parent about enrolling in PAT
- Documenting all necessary information
- And, much more

Each home visit lasts 60 – 90 minutes. This time is spent covering the well-researched PAT Curriculum. The Parent Educator has spent a great deal of time learning and understanding the PAT Curriculum in order to be a knowledgeable support person for the PAT parents.

The Parent Educators' day ends when she goes to bed after returning emails or text messages from parents and colleagues. These women work off and on throughout the day and weekend to do what needs to be done to support families with young children.

Parent Educators (PEs) are some of the hardest working and dedicated individuals I've ever met. They are not well paid. Our PEs earn less than an elementary teacher. All have 4-year degrees. Many have Master's Level degrees. Some are past the age of retirement, but choose to continue to work with PAT.

Why do these women choose to work so hard when they could work in a job being paid more money or could retire?

They work with PAT because they know how important their job is. They know they make a powerful and important difference in the lives of Kansas children and parents. They see the results each time they go on a home visit. They see the results when they connect families at a group connection. They see the results as they continue to connect with families in the community even after their children are over age 3.

Although prevention is hard to measure, they know the outcomes for these children and parents would have been different if it wasn't for PAT. They know that:

- The child they referred to the eye doctor might not have received glasses until she failed to learn how to read.
- The parent new to the area might not have found the church they now attend after meeting a parent from that church at a group connection.
- The child who wasn't talking at 24 months might not have received Infant Toddler Special Services and would have needed Special Services through elementary school.
- The mother who had post partum depression might not have sought help from her doctor without support from the Parent Educator.

As a new Parent Educator in 1993, I enrolled a young stay-at-home mother. She had a degree in psychology and was married to a Kansas Air National Guard Pilot who was often overseas. On paper, this family wouldn't have qualified for TANF or any other needs-based program. They also could not have paid for services on a single income. However, this mother had been raised in the foster care system and had been abused as a child. They lived in a rural community where she didn't know anyone. During her time in PAT, she had 3 children under age 3. She needed a variety of support and information. She was depressed, insecure, scared, and isolated. Her children are now all grown. All graduated from high school and are attending college. Her sons are Eagle Scouts. All are members of the Kansas Air National Guard. I know Parents as Teachers made a difference to this family and their outcome.

This is what Parent Educators do. They support parents to be the best parents they can be. They support all parents. Income is not always the best indicator of needs. Parents and families have a variety of needs.

Parent Educators have the 2nd most important job: Supporting parents in Parenting. Parents have the 1st most important job: Parenting. Parenting is also the hardest job there is with the least amount of training. PAT Parent Educators are dedicated to supporting parents in their hardest and most important job of Parenting.

Please continue to provide funds for Parents as Teachers in Kansas. Parents need this valuable support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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February 2, 2016

Education Budget Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding our experiences with the Parents As Teachers program. My wife LaTona and I moved to Holton in October 2012, two short weeks later, our first child, Brady was born. LaTona heard about the Parents as Teacher program a couple weeks later and we were blessed to enroll in the program when Brady was just a couple months old. Being new parents we had read up on many different books and articles and felt that we were ready, but more help and guidance was welcomed, as it was at no extra cost to our family budget. In April of 2015 we welcomed our second son Reid and have loved having both of them enrolled in the program.

Barb Schul, our PAT Educator has been meeting with our family monthly for the past three years. She has been the constant support and guidance that we have needed as new parents. She supported my wife when she struggled with goals she set such as breast feeding, she has provided us with activities that we could do as a family to help our children develop and she has helped us identify areas of concern that needed extra concentration.

The major area for us has been Brady's speech. We knew that he was difficult to understand, but didn't know that he was behind his peers. Barb was able to set us up with Tiny K to get an evaluation done on Brady. They did decide that while he was difficult to understand that he would not qualify at that time, but they did recommend that when he turned three we visit with the school district regarding these concerns. Brady has since turned three and Barb was able to set us up with the speech therapist in the Holton School District. He is currently receiving services through them and is improving immensely.

I am confident that both of our children are more successful and will be more prepared for the future because of Barb and our years with Parents as Teachers and we are very grateful for that. Our family does not qualify for any services through the state and unfortunately we would not be enrolled in the program if we had to pay a fee.

We believe that the children are our future! If we can help them develop and reach different milestones at the appropriate time, identify areas of concern quickly, and get them connected with the resources that they need immediately, it will benefit the future of our state. Please do not cut funding to this program. We as parents need this guidance from an educator and unfortunately many would not be able to pay extra for this help. I think Benjamin Franklin said it best, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

Thanks for your time,

Mike Eiberger
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