



P.A.R.E.N.T.S.

Parental Adults: Reading, Encouraging, Nurturing, Teaching, Supporting

Program Guide

*Resources for parents and
caregivers to support
their children's early learning*

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of the *P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program Guide* contact

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Foreword to the Revised Edition

What's New in the *P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program Guide*

The *P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program Guide* has been revised with valuable input from coordinators of several California State Library sponsored family literacy projects. The number of lessons has increased, Home Books and Home Reading Activity Reports have been added, and greater emphasis has been placed on writing as an adult literacy activity. Handouts and videos have been updated and increased in number. New, wonderful and useful children's books have been added to the Comprehensive List of Books.

Family Literacy

Data from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) in the mid 1990's revealed that over half of America's workforce has reading and writing problems. Efforts to raise literacy levels in the U.S. have proven most effective when programs intervene as early as possible to improve the skills that are passed on from one generation to the next. Parents, grandparents, stepparents, uncles and aunts are motivated to improve their own skills by their desire to give the children in their lives a better chance of success than they had. This intergenerational concept, that focuses on the transference of literacy skills from one generation to the next, is Family Literacy.

All family literacy programs address four content areas:

1. Adult literacy skills improvement
2. Emergent literacy needs of children
3. Parenting education
4. Activities revolving around books and reading that involve adults and children together

These four components may be addressed in a variety of ways. Self-contained programs, such as some Even Starts, provide all services through one agency. Other programs may link existing community agencies that provide services for adults with agencies that serve children.

Family literacy is based on the premise that parents are their children's first and most important teachers. With the support of the adults in their lives, children learn to navigate the world with the help of language, communicate their needs to others, and respond to the printed materials surrounding them. They experience limits and develop self-control, make choices and solve problems. Parents and parent figures model how to strengthen family ties and participate in society successfully.

As first teachers, adults who talk with and read aloud to children on a regular basis are promoting those children's success in school. Therefore, adults whose literacy skills are well-developed are at an advantage in performing their role as first teachers to their children. Children without appropriate models are often born into family cycles of low literacy and the correlated conditions of low self-esteem, poverty and crime, with little societal support to break out of those cycles.

Adult learners, desiring to make their children's lives better than their own, have a powerful motivation for improving their own literacy skills. Literacy programs have long been aware that, for the adult learner, motivation is the key issue. Often adults who do not come forward for literacy help for themselves are interested in

receiving instruction if it will improve the lives of their children. Family literacy is successful in drawing adults into literacy activities when they see it as a way to support their children's early learning.

Many adult learners did not establish good habits of learning in childhood and so must "learn how to learn" at the same time they are trying to absorb new information. The *P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program Guide* directly addresses those adults who are developing their own learning skills while they are in the process of modeling those skills for their children.

For libraries, adult schools, Head Starts, Even Starts, and other literacy providers and social programs, the *P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program Guide* offers a useful model for interrupting the cycle of low literacy. It will help the children reached through these programs become one of America's most valuable future resources rather than potential liabilities. This future resource will, in turn, create a new generation of literate children. And so the cycle passed on from one generation to the next will be a positive one.

Program Overview

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program (*Parental Adults: Reading, Encouraging, Nurturing, Teaching, Supporting*) is designed to provide guidance in parenting skills to adult learners in literacy programs or other adult-centered instruction. The course is appropriate for any adult who functions in a parental capacity. This adult may not be biologically related to the child in her or his life, but is a role model who can promote the development of the child's literacy skills. Daycare providers, neighbors, and pre-school teachers, as well as parents and other relatives, can all benefit from participating in the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program.

Many adult and family literacy programs struggle to provide their adult learners with appropriate parenting information. Frequently, packaged programs are written for educated, middle class, two-parent families. Adapting these programs to levels more accessible to adults with limited literacy and/or English skills is a time-consuming task. In addition, adults who wish to improve their literacy skills do not necessarily see a need to enroll in a course on parenting skills or may be intimidated by the reading material provided.

Efforts to improve family literacy must be careful not to overlook the positive qualities that adult learners already provide in their family life. Even when unable to model some necessary literacy skills, these adults still pass on attitudes, values and habits which are important to the child's development. In addition, many literacy students are second language learners and may bring with them cultural traditions of parenting that are different from current practices in the United States. Therefore, a great deal of sensitivity without judgment needs to be exercised when offering parenting information to adults.

The Public Library

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program is modeled after the statewide, state-funded Families for Literacy (FFL) programs that are offered in many of California's public libraries. Library-based family literacy programs are an integral part of any comprehensive family literacy effort and can be viewed as its base or foundation. In support of learners' application activities, the public library is available as a free resource for a wide variety of children's books.

Children's Books

A core component in the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program is the giving of Home and Gift Books to those receiving adult literacy instruction. Placing quality children's picture books into the homes of low-literate families encourages them to read to the children in their lives. Involving parents and caregivers in the process of selecting those books not only teaches them what is age-appropriate for their children, but also

increases their desire to read the books they have chosen. This involvement often motivates these adults to use the public library to continue selecting books for the children in their lives.

Family Storytimes

In library-based family literacy programs, the storytime component is available on-site. For agencies not offering their own storytimes, where adults and children together share activities around books and reading, public library storytimes are available, as well. Participants in the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program benefit most when they are encouraged to talk and write about their experiences with their children at storytimes.

Program Philosophy

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program aims to support learners' development in five areas by raising consciousness and influencing attitudes and behavior to:

1. Break the cycle of low literacy.
2. Become conscious positive role models as mothers, fathers, and caregivers.
3. Become a positive influence as your child's first teacher.
4. Empower your children with literacy skills and self-esteem.
5. Use children's books to teach your children and to spend quality time with them.

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program is careful not to take a confrontational or advice-giving stance. It offers information and encourages individuals to take that information and integrate it with what they already know. In this way, the program builds on the positive rather than stressing the negative, and allows each adult to create a philosophy that works for him or her personally. There are, however, three recommended philosophical guidelines to remember:

- Alternatives to spanking or hitting children are available.
- Verbal abuse or name calling is damaging to children.
- Reading aloud is the single most important thing that nurtures children's success in school.

Evaluation & Follow-Up

The evaluation tools in the Handout Masters section of this Program Guide help measure attitudes and behavior before and after exposure to the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. course material. The data collected using these tools can be configured to produce measurable outcomes for reports and grant writing. It is recommended that participants sign an agreement to complete follow-up surveys which will be sent to them approximately 6 months after they complete the course. Paperback thank you books should be offered as an incentive for participants returning completed surveys.

Evaluation tools in the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program are listed below.

Measuring Changes in Parenting Attitudes is a questionnaire given before the start of the course in Lesson 1 and, at the end, in Lesson 15 to quantify the impact of the program.

Family Literacy Survey measures changes in behavior, specifically if and how often learners read to their children, and if they use the public library.

Family History Survey, used in Lesson 13, notes if and how often learners were read to as children, what materials were read to them, if they were taken to the library, and what grade they completed in school.

Follow-Up Agreement, used in Lesson 15, allows for students to provide their correct addresses so that you can send them the surveys.

Follow-Up Survey is sent to learners 6 months after they completed the course, along with the post Family Literacy Survey.

Getting Started

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program gives adult learners the informational context they need to function as effective teachers of the children in their lives. It instructs them about how to use children's picture books as basic teaching tools.

When offering the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program in either group or one-to-one settings, keep in mind that these sessions offer places for adult learners to take risks by asking and answering questions. They are also safe places for learners to practice and apply newly acquired knowledge and learning strategies before using them at home.

When students treat each other respectfully, the group becomes a supportive social network. Participating in small groups or pairs and using learning strategies that incorporate listening, speaking, reading, writing, and problem-solving skills promotes inquiry and collaboration that is characteristic of active learning.

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program offers instruction about child development and the discussion of strategies for coping with a child's behavior. This helps parents and caregivers learn to establish reasonable expectations and limits, which, in turn, help their children develop cognitively, physically, and socially.

Delivery Models

The P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program has 15 one-hour lessons that can be taught singly, or two together with a break in between (except for Lesson 1. Introduction & Orientation). There are advantages to teaching two lessons back-to-back, with a break in between. It contributes to continuity of content, reduces your set-up time and allows for completing activities in the following lesson if you need to. Within each lesson, activities can easily be rearranged and some can be deleted if time runs short. Depending on the schedules of your learner population, you may choose to offer the course once a week for one or two hours, or twice a week for one hour each. Allow either 16 or 8 weeks for a full course cycle, which includes time for you to complete paperwork and documentation.

Several options for instruction and discussions are possible for providing the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program to a group of second language learners. It is recommended that you provide all instruction and homework assignments in English, allowing time for vocabulary development. Then you may choose to hold discussions in the first language of your learners. You may be able to facilitate these discussions yourself, or you may need to ask a bilingual learner to act as translator. This allows discussions to progress at a relatively normal pace without extensive delays while participants search for appropriate English words with which to express themselves.

Small Groups

The number of participants should be limited to 15 if the sessions are to be effective. During the *What Are Your Values?* exercises, it is important that each person add his or her perspective to the list on the board. In a group with more than 15 members, learners may have difficulty paying attention to so many participants. A smaller group has more time for in-depth discussion and personal problem solving.

Sitting in a circle deepens the level of trust and sharing between learners of all ages. The ability to see everyone's face, not just the facilitator's, changes the dynamics of group discussions. You may want to wait until some of the lessons are completed before opening the discussion up to participants' sharing their personal situations and problems with the group. Be careful not to let any one participant overwhelm or overpower the group.

One-to-One Tutoring

One-to-one tutoring allows for the learner to absorb information at his or her own pace, to stop, question and discuss whenever necessary. Lessons may be combined and some omitted, since they can be tailored to the needs of an individual student. Although valuable for many learners, the one-to-one session does not allow the learner to benefit from the variety of viewpoints shared in a group discussion. In order for the material to be useful to the learner, the tutor must substitute for the group interaction and be willing to participate as an equal in the exercises and discussion topics. Group exercises and video viewing should be used as a conversational guide between tutor and learner. Instructions for writing on the board should be applied by the tutor to a Learner Notebook and should be referred to throughout the course.

For the *What Are Your Values?* exercises, the tutor needs to share his or her own values, so that the learner does not feel that s/he is being interviewed. At the same time, it is essential that the tutor not impose his or her values on the learner.

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator of the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program may be a paid staff person already familiar with family literacy, a volunteer tutor, or an educator new to the concepts of family literacy. Regardless of the facilitator's background, there are several guidelines to keep in mind.

- Reflect on your own childhood reading experiences. Before beginning the course, prepare for attitudes and feelings about reading that may surface in the group.
- Consider how you will use your parenting experience (if you are a parent). It is common for learners to want your opinion, so remind them that you are not an expert in everything. Present information and facilitate discussions around

parenting needs and how to use children's books to address them, but refrain from giving advice.

- Create the conditions for respect and safety by including learners in a person-to-person relationship. Think “we” rather than “I” and “they.” When a parent or caregiver asks you to solve a problem or give advice in answering a question, ask other group members to share their experiences and information. This shared problem-solving approach helps promote development of learners’ critical thinking skills.
- Create a list of local social service agencies in order to provide referral information to learners whose children may have psychosocial, health, or daily survival problems that interfere with learning.
- Hold the focus. Guide learners to return to lesson content while allowing each participant to feel heard. Do not allow discussions to turn into therapy sessions.
- Model good parenting.
- Do not blame learners for their lack of information.
- Listen carefully to learners’ emotional tone and body language surrounding their words.
- Gather more information by asking what else was/is going on.
- Lead learners to discover their own answers.
- Do not argue or get caught up in being right, but clearly state your non-judgmental point of view.
- If appropriate, give learners specific information, particular words or behavior to try.

What to Do First

Select, Purchase and Read Books.

Begin with books used for instruction, then create a collection of approximately 80 children's picture books (which includes some Show Books mentioned in each lesson) that reflect the ethnicity of your learner population. Read over all the books so that you are familiar with book topics, as well as language and illustrations, in order to use the materials effectively yourself or support your teachers and tutors as they present the lessons.

Create a List of Local Agencies.

Research contact information for school registration, special needs assessments for children, medical and dental clinics, health and human services, and domestic violence hotlines and shelters. Learners can practice literacy skills by accessing the information they need in the context of parenting.

Assemble Supplies.

Provide a notebook or folder for each learner participating in the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program. A small binder or folder with pockets will help learners keep handouts and writing assignments. If possible, display the covers of children's books and parent resource books on the walls of your room or on available surfaces. Learners often request to see a book whose cover they have noticed on display.

Arrange for Equipment.

You need a table for your library collection, a board or easel for writing, and a VCR and monitor for showing videos.

Designing a Budget

Initial startup costs for purchasing your classroom P.A.R.E.N.T.S. library collection of children's books, videos and parenting resource materials are a one-time investment. The operating budget for implementing the P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Program is configured by calculating the cost of a complete course cycle serving 10 different learners every quarter, including Home Books, Gift Books, evaluations and storytimes.

Startup Costs

\$2,000

Once the classroom library collection, videos and parenting resource books have been purchased, these costs can be eliminated.

Classroom library collection	80 titles of children's picture books, including Show Books and Teacher Read Aloud Books
Parenting resource books	12 titles
Instructional videos	5 videos
Equipment	access to VCR and monitor, photocopy machine, white board

Operating Costs

This operating budget is calculated for 10 students in group instruction for one cycle. Costs can be reduced by using paperback instead of hardcover editions of books, by reducing the number of Home Books or offering storytimes less frequently than monthly or using volunteer presenters.

Staff Requirements

31 hours per cycle

- Instruction 15 hours teaching per cycle
10 hours prep time per cycle
- Document and order books 3 hours per cycle
- Organize and record survey data 3 hours per cycle

Materials

\$850 for 10 students per cycle

- Home Books 25 paperback or board book titles
1 copy each lesson per student
- Participant folders 1 per participant
- Handouts and surveys 47 handouts and 4 survey masters
1 copy per student of each
- Activities and games various materials

Gift Books

\$400 for 10 students per cycle

- Gift Books 1 per child of each student per cycle
hardcover, paperback or board children's book
- Parenting pamphlets or books 1 per student per cycle

Family Storytimes

0 - \$300 per month

- Storytime presentations 45 minutes per month plus 3 hours prep time

Definition of Terms

- **Home Books** are the paperbacks used for instruction in each lesson. Every participant who is willing reads aloud one page (or more if the text is very short). Some learners will “pass” because they cannot read well or at all. Allow this to occur without comment. In one-to-one tutoring, the learner and tutor can take turns, each reading a page or two. Participants choose one Home Book from each lesson to take home, complete a reading activity with their children, and then keep for their home libraries, if your budget permits.
- **Show Books** are used to reinforce the theme of the lesson and to introduce adult learners to the wide variety of children's books that are available. Summarize or read them aloud but always show the pictures.
- **Teacher Read Aloud Books** are used by instructors to model read aloud skills. You may choose to purchase multiple copies and offer them as Home Books if they are available in paperback editions. Remember you are modeling reading aloud at all times, so read loudly, clearly, slowly, with expression and enjoyment.
- **Gift Books** are personally selected by adult learners for the children in their lives. Gift Books should be given at graduation along with Certificates of Completion. Learners need time to look through the collection in order to practice selecting age-appropriate books. This helps learners gain confidence for when they take their children to the local public library.
- **What Are My Values?** exercises are part of Lessons 2, 7 and 13. Every learner in the group should participate, and each response is written on the board. Whether in a group or one-to-one, this is a time for reflection and an opportunity for learners to get to know themselves and each other better.
- **Handouts** are written in easy, clear language and short sentences. Most learners can read these handouts, even if they have limited literacy skills, because they are read aloud first by the teacher or tutor. Handouts are used to reinforce the theme of the lesson and serve as reference materials for learners.
- **Surveys and Questionnaires** are distributed in Lessons 1, 13 and 15. Be sure to read them aloud, line by line, so that poor or non-readers can follow along.