



What is Parents as Teachers?

Parents as Teachers is:

- A parent education and family support program serving families through out pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. Services to families include personal visits, group socialization opportunities with other families, developmental screenings to ensure a child's development is on track, and referrals to other services as appropriate.
- Designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education.
- A free voluntary program for families.

Why Parents as Teachers?

- Research has clearly shown that the early years are critical in a child's development and lay the foundation for success in school and in life.
- Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives; they are their children's first teachers. If we want to make a positive difference in the lives of children, we must make an impact with their parents.
- Extensive analysis by economists has shown that investing in effective early childhood programs, such as Parents as Teachers, produces great returns. These returns benefit the community through reduced crime, welfare and educational remediation.

Why Focus on the Years Before School Starts?

- Brain development that takes place before age 1 is rapid and extensive; the influence of the early environment on brain development is long lasting.
- Developmental "windows of opportunity" are periods of time when children are especially adept at learning specific skills including:
 - Motor skills such as turning over, walking, drawing;
 - Sensory skills such as seeing and hearing;
 - Communication skills including language; and
 - Social skills such as playing and interacting with other children.
- During these windows of opportunity, it is important to provide positive experiences for young children at the appropriate times to ensure optimal development.

Why Focus on the Parent?

- Parent education helps parents to understand what to expect during each stage of development and how to promote the best development in their child.
- Research shows that parental involvement in their child's learning is linked to the development of the child's academic skills, including reading and writing.

How is Parents as Teachers Adapted for Alaska?

- The majority of Parents as Teachers programs in Alaska hire people from within the communities being served to be trained as Parent Educators. This helps to ensure the people presenting the curriculum have a solid understanding of the community and the local culture.
- Alaska has its own Nationally Certified Parents as Teachers Curriculum Training Team. These trainers reside in Alaska and are experienced in providing Parents as Teachers services to families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.
- Parent Educators are trained to adapt activities from the Parents as Teachers Curriculum to reflect the local community and culture of the family.
- Visits are provided in the family's home language.

What Outcomes has Parents as Teachers Achieved?

- At age 3, children who have been enrolled in Parents as Teachers are more advanced in language, social development, problem solving and other cognitive abilities.
- Children enrolled in Parents as Teachers score higher on kindergarten readiness tests.
- Children who participate in Parents as Teachers score higher standardized measures of reading, math and language in grades first through fourth.
- Parents who participate in Parents as Teachers are more confident about their parenting skills.
- Parents who participate in Parents as Teachers are involved in their child's education beginning at birth and they maintain this involvement in their child's schooling. Parent involvement has been shown to be a key component of a child's success in school.

For more information on Parents as Teachers, contact Lisa Danielson, Parents as Teachers Alaska State Coordinator at ldanielson@ruralcap.com or 907-865-7334.