

County Connections

Schools of the 21st Century
**Rockland
21C**
Collaborative for
Children & Youth

Building a Comprehensive Support System that Links Family, School & Community Together ★ Vol. 8, No. 1 ★ SUMMER 2009

THE PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM:

Rockland County's home-visiting program gives children a head start in school

Lois Taylor, home visitor for The Parent-Child Home Program, walked up the porch stairs and knocked at an aluminum door. Maria answered and was clearly happy to see Ms. Taylor. Trailing behind Maria was her five year-old daughter, Rose Mary, who ran to embrace Ms. Taylor's legs. "I missed you, Teacher," said Rose Mary.

Rose Mary was two years old and spoke very few words when Lois began working with her family. The second of three children, Rose Mary was the first to complete the two-year, literacy-focused home-visiting program, Parent-Child Home (PCHP). "She was timid and didn't talk much, only some words in Spanish and those were for mom," said Lois of Rose Mary's speech.

Lois started by fostering an environment in which Rose Mary had her mother's undivided positive attention during the two half-hour visits she made each week, and that attention is what Rose Mary thrived on. "She loved playing and interacting with her mom," recalled Lois. "And as I began to read books and play with Rose Mary, mom was very happy to reinforce all the work we did."

It took several visits before Rose Mary and Maria really trusted Lois but once they did "they were fully engaged, and I couldn't stop smiling after that ... and neither could they," said Lois. She paused, then smiled and continued, "I was really pleased that they often continued to read after my time was up with them."

After a couple of months in the program, Rose Mary's timidity developed into confidence as she started stringing



words together to form sentences. "She built upon every concept I introduced, like colors, numbers, and letters, and was eager to learn more," remembered Lois. "And mom was willing and ready to read new books with her daughter."

Rose Mary's vocabulary steadily increased through her exposure to rich verbal interaction, and by year two she was using "so many different words to express her needs," says Lois.

When Rose Mary began attending Head Start at age four, her lead teacher was impressed with how well she could communicate and name some of her favorite books.

Maria recalls, "The teacher asked me if Rose Mary attended school before Head Start and I said yes. 'She had a teacher who came to our home every week and read books and played with her, and who taught me how to help Rose Mary learn better.'" Turning to the interviewer, Maria says as she points to a plaque hung on one of the living room walls, "See, she received a certificate for completing the program."

Even though Lois no longer meets with Rose Mary every week, she still comes by to visit occasionally and brings a book for them to read

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Funding opportunities for PCHP

Funding opportunities may well be coming. President Obama's administration "is committed over the long term to expanding early childhood educational opportunities and creating a more seamless web of high-quality early childhood services for parents and children," according to the US Department of Education guidance for local educational uses of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or ARRA, funds.

The FY 2010 budget that has been drawn up includes funding for the creation of a comprehensive zero-to-five system to prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. In Washington, home visiting is emerging as a program strategy with traction. Bethany Little, who works in Senator Edward Kennedy's office and as chief education counsel for the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, spoke enthusiastically in late May about home visiting, saying that it is one strategy that the committee is "very excited about." Originally, the Nurse-Family Partnership model was the entire focus of discussion, but at this time five different home visiting models, including PCHP, are in play.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has provisions that could benefit Parent-Child Home sites. Congress and the United States Department of Education have made clear that some of these short-term funds should be used for early education. While many school districts already fund PCHP using Title 1 monies, there is an additional \$13 billion allocated to this funding stream that could be used to support support

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Rockland County's home-visiting program

together. "My whole family has benefited from this program," said Maria, including her six year-old son, Daniel, who participated in one year of the program alongside Rose Mary before he started kindergarten and her two-year-old daughter, Johanna, who, as a baby, participated in one year of the program.

"Maria is an inspiration to other mothers," says Martha Lerner-Iglody, who supervises Lois' visits to Rose Mary's family.

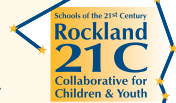
As for starting kindergarten next fall, Rose Mary is eager. "I want to go to school on Saturday and Sunday too!"

And that pretty much is the award-winning, research-proven Parent-Child Home Program. It provides opportunities where they are otherwise scarce to enable children to thrive. PCHP has operated in Rockland County for the last seven years, thanks to supporting grants from the County of Rockland, Senator Morahan, and the United Way of Rockland, with this infrastructure supported by Rockland 21C, and because of the commitments of the participating school districts:

East Ramapo, North Rockland, and Ramapo Central, plus Nyack, which runs a similar program, and Nanuet, which is operated by its nonprofit Family Resource Center. Both East Ramapo and Nyack dedicate significant staff time to coordinating their home-visiting programs.



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Data shows PCHP bridges achievement gap

The national program has been the subject of significant academic research studies. A study released in 2007 by New York University Professor LaRue Allen found that 135 Long Island kindergartners who went through the program performed similarly to their peers on a number of tests measuring early literacy and classroom readiness, “despite the challenges of limited English proficiency, low parental education, immigration status, and poverty” that they faced, and concluded that **the program is successfully “bridging the achievement gap.”**¹ A 2002 South Carolina study in *The Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* found that the children who graduated from the program performed even better on the first-grade state assessments than their counterparts, “both free-lunch eligible and minority children statewide and in the district.”² Specifically, “93.1% of Parent-Child Home Program children receiving free lunch passed the assessment test. These scores exceed the state passage rates for each of these groups by 18% each.” And a 1998 landmark graduation study, also in *The Journal*, reported that 123 children who completed the program in Pittsfield, MA, were far more likely to graduate from high school than a control group (84% versus 54%).³

The National Center for Education Communication of the US Office of Education says the program is a “Model Compensatory Education Program.” The National Diffusion Network of the US Department of Education reports it is “an educational program that works,” as does the NY State Department of Education. And the Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect declares the program is an “evidence-based home-visiting program.”

PCHP School Districts

We applaud the participating school districts that have served 329 children in Rockland County since 2000.

- 160 East Ramapo Central School District
- 35 Nanuet School District
- 71 North Rockland Central School District
- 41 Nyack School District
- 22 Ramapo Central School District

East Ramapo Central School District followed 30 first-and-second graders who graduated from the Parent-Child Home Program and found that 28 were reading at or above grade level (93%).

¹ Evaluation of the School Readiness of Parent-Child Home Program Participants: Abstract of the New York University Study of Five Long Island School Districts NHSA Dialog: A Research-to-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field Vol. 10, No. 1 2007.

² Levenstein, P., Levenstein S., & Oliver, D. (2002) First grade school readiness of former child participants in a South Carolina replication of the Parent-Child Home Program. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 23(3).

³ Long-term impact of a verbal interaction program for at-risk toddlers: An exploratory study of high school outcomes in a replication of the Mother-Child Home Program (The Parent-Child Home Program). (*Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 1998).

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In Rockland, most home visitors are either Family Resource Center staff or members of the Rockland County Youth Bureau’s AmeriCorps’ Literacy Corps. Home visitors are trained by East Ramapo’s staff and by 21C, and make two half-hour visits each week for the two years between the child’s second and fourth birthdays. One week, the family receives a book as a gift, and the next, an educational toy. During each visit, the home visitor models skills that demonstrate how to educate through books and play.

As part of its original strategic plan, Rockland 21C sought to establish a countywide home-visiting program for children from pre-natal to age five. Members of the strategic plan implementation team researched and presented several home-visiting programs to school district administrators, who selected The Parent-Child Home Program for implementation because of its link to educational success. Rockland 21C then brought together representatives of school districts, nonprofits and public agencies to be trained in the model, and it continues to assist, recently by securing a Community Impact award from United Way of Rockland County and by continuing to work with the Youth Bureau to recruit and place members of AmeriCorps’ Literacy Corps.

Meanwhile, in another part of Rockland, PCHP home visitor Anna Jones knocks at a wooden door. Myriam answers, along with her two-year-old son, Joseph, who peeks his head around his mom’s frame and smiles. “I brought a new book for you, Mommy, and me to read together,” says Anna. “And guess what? You get to keep it and read it whenever you and Mommy want.”

Funding opportunities for PCHP cont'd from page 2

programs such as PCHP, according to the national office of Parent-Child Home, and these monies are specifically intended to supplement, not supplant, existing funding. ARRA funds last two years, long enough to hire more home visitors to get an expanded cohort of families through the program. Also, two billion dollars is the expected allocation for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, of which \$93,587 million is targeted to improve infant and child care. "The Parent-Child Home Program's [new]

family child care provider model could be funded in this category, as its focus is on providing home visits to family child care providers to provide professional development services in to the family child care setting to improve practice and the literacy and language environment in the homes," reports the national office of PCHP. Early

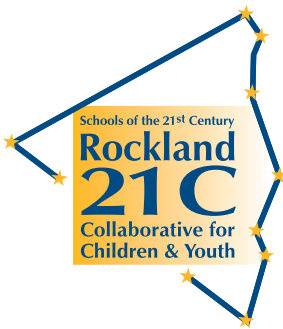
Head Start funding could also be applied to home visits.

21C has applied to the state for stimulus funds to hire more home visitors, but awaits word on how or whether its request fits program guidelines.

How can you get involved?

The Rockland County Literacy Corps needs dedicated people who are passionate about children's literacy and devoted to sharing skills that help children. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a member of the Literacy Corps, call 845-708-7307 or email rcamericorps@co.rockland.ny.us

Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth is a pioneering countywide partnership with children as our priority. Our mission is to ensure the best possible future for every child by building a comprehensive support system that links family, school and community together.



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