

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

THE PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM, INC.



Parent-Child Home Program Teacher Coordinator Sarah Benjamin visits with Farrah Allen and her 4-year old daughter, Quydasha.

NEWSDAY PHOTO: MICHAEL E. ACH

The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc.

Preparing Young Children to Learn and Succeed in School

Helping families create a rich foundation for learning before children enter school is the mission of The Parent-Child Home Program, a nonprofit organization that has assisted 50,000 families since it was established 40 years ago. Founder Dr. Phyllis Levenstein designed the program to offset rising high school dropout rates by increasing children's language and literacy skills while supporting parents in preparing their children to learn during their early years.

"We serve families that face obstacles to educational success such as poverty, limited parental education, language and literacy barriers, homelessness and geographic isolation," says Executive Director Sarah E. Walzer. "The Parent-Child Home Program bridges the preparation gap, helping parents to prepare their children to enter school with the tools they will need to become successful students." Walzer adds that the books and educational toys the program delivers to these families are often the first books, blocks, puzzles and games in their homes.

Trained home visitors meet with parents and their two- and three-year-old children twice weekly for a period of two years. During these sessions, home visitors model reading, conversation and play activities to build language and literacy skills and help parents create language-rich environments in their homes. Parents are also prepared with the tools they need to be effective teachers and continue educational activities at home after the program ends. Emphasizing the joy and value of parent-child interaction and "learning with love," the program also provides books and educational toys the children can enjoy for years to come.

Headquartered in Port Washington, The Parent-Child Home Program now has more than 140 replication sites across the nation as well as in Bermuda, Canada and the Netherlands. Several research studies have proven its effectiveness, noting that participants achieve at or above the national average on standardized reading and math tests in elementary school and are graduating high school at a rate 20 percent higher than their demographic peers. Feedback from educators and parents also underscores the program's results. Children enter school reading above grade level and parents are prepared to support their children's academic success long term.

"The Parent-Child Home Program will continue to expand into communities where children are entering school unprepared to learn," Walzer says. "As the first early literacy home-visiting program established four decades ago, we will continue to support healthy and successful early childhood development and provide early literacy information and training based upon our growing body of longitudinal research."

—Claire Curry