Many high quality interactions between a parent and their child happen during unstructured experiences. Activities like meal preparation, trips to the playground, creating art, exploring science concepts or completing their night time routine, can help both the parent and the child build lifelong traits. These traits may include confidence, competence and a healthy self-esteem; all of which affirm a sense of value.¹

Families can build opportunities to play in their daily routine. For some families, this is a more realistic perspective of integrating play into their lives, as many families are inundated with other work and personal responsibilities. Regardless of how families choose to integrate play into their lives, it is important that these interactions are of the highest quality.

When working directly with families, family support professionals can successfully support these interactions by utilizing the following strategies:

Coach parents by encouraging open ended play. You may pose, “I wonder” or “What if” questions to the parents. Ask them to think reflectively about both how they and their child typically play and why they play that way. Focus on the parent’s role as an observer of their child’s behaviors. Encourage them to intentionally engage with their children to support their child’s overall development.

Encourage child driven play. Ask parents to allow the child to develop their own rules of play. Parents can guide their child’s thinking and help them to think through critical parts of play such as safety. As children learn to work through ways to engineer play, they will build their ability to problem solve, be honest, generous and considerate of others.

Utilize materials that are found in the home. Partner with the parent to set up play spaces that encourage different types of play, including practice, constructive, rough and tumble and dramatic play. Using a family’s household materials sends the message to the family, that they are the first and most important teacher and that the home is the first classroom. It reaffirms to parents that they have the needed materials to foster their child’s development.

When families actively engage in play and recreational activities, they learn about their child’s interests and temperament. The family support professional can also use these moments of play to bolster the protective factor, knowledge of parenting and child development, one of the five protective factors from the Strengthening Families™ framework. When this protective factor is present, parents are more likely to impose developmentally appropriate limits and opportunities that promote independence.

Affiliate Performance Report News

For PAT affiliates the annual report season is past. The Affiliate Performance Report and Performance Measures Report can be viewed and printed, as well as the APR summary, which is available as an infographic or a two-page document. The statistical information in these reports are to be used in your continuous quality improvement processes. The summaries may be useful to provide evidence of your impact with families to your funders and community.

The 2017-18 APR can be viewed at the PAT portal. To prepare affiliates for the new Essential Requirements in the 2018-19 program year, optional questions have been included. Check the 17-18 APR form now to learn more. Some of the outcome assessment tools are listed. It may be a good time to try one or two using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) method. PDSA forms are located in the supervisor’s handbook.

If you have any question about accessing the reports, please contact us.

Using Penelope? Need Help?
Penelope Q&A sessions are available upon request for all PAT Affiliate programs in Pennsylvania. Contact Wenda Deardorff for more information or to schedule a session.

Using the Café Model to Support Parents and Build Protective Factors

Looking for an interactive and fun way to engage parents while also building their parenting knowledge and communication skills? The search is over! Cafés allow for small group conversations about parenting in a safe and comfortable environment. There are several models of cafés, each with a slightly different purpose, and organizations are encouraged to explore to find the model that will work best in their community. Read on to learn more about the characteristics of cafés and how you can bring this model to your community.

While there are different models of cafés, most are based on the World Café Model, developed in 1995. Key elements of this design include small group conversations guided by participant agreements to ensure safety and everyone’s participation, the recording of ideas, and switching small groups to share ideas more broadly.1 This model has been used around the world to bring together diverse stakeholders and promote strategic dialogue. Organizations that work with families, have adapted this model as a way to engage parents in meaningful conversations that promote the building of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. These factors, when robust in families, support optimal child development and reduce the risk of child maltreatment.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), which developed the framework, has identified cafés as a strategy through which “parents and caregivers build leadership and relationships as well as the protective factors that help to strengthen their families.”² As noted above, there are several types of cafés, three of which focus specifically on supporting caregivers to build protective factors. Those models are the Community Café, Caring Conversations and Be Strong Parent Café. While the models have common elements and similar structures, each has a specific purpose.

Community Cafés were developed in the state of Washington and are now supported by a volunteer Community Café leadership team. These cafés can focus on issues related to parenting or be used as a tool to assess and address community needs. While they are rooted in the protective factors, questions may not address the protective factors specifically.

Those implementing this model develop their own questions to meet the needs of their communities.

Caring Conversations is a model developed by Zero to Three. The purpose of these cafés are to build collaborative relationships between parents and early childhood care providers. They are intended to be held with both caregivers and child care professionals present. The facilitator’s guide provides seven themed cafes with pre-selected questions and supporting handouts. The topics are rooted in the protective factors.

Be Strong Parent Café model was developed by Strengthening Families Illinois and is now facilitated by Be Strong Families. This model encourages parents to discuss and build protective factors through the use of a deck of cards with printed questions. A café planning team selects a theme and chooses questions for each café. Café teams are encouraged to plan cafés in series so that all five protective factors are discussed. To use this model, teams are encouraged to attend a two-day training institute to learn how to facilitate the model with fidelity. In Pennsylvania, the Strengthening Families leadership team has trained instructors that can provide this training. Recently the Family Support team at the Center for Schools and Communities hosted a webinar on this model featuring a panel of organizations that have been trained to host parent cafés.

Center for Schools and Communities • 275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200 • Camp Hill, PA 17011 • (717) 763-1661
As you can see, there are a variety of ways that cafés can be used to engage and support families. Which model will you choose?

Contact the Family Support team to learn about upcoming Parent Café Trainings or to bring this model to your community.

Learn More
- Be Strong Families: Parent Cafés Website – information about the Be Strong Parent Café model
- Community Café Website – information about the Community Café model and facilitation guides, as well as other resources
- Let’s Talk! Engaging Parents with Be Strong Parent Cafés – recorded webinar
- Using Café Conversations to Build Protective Factors and Parent Leadership – a CSSP publication that talks about common characteristics of café models
- Zero to Three Website – information about the Caring Conversations facilitator guide


Safe Kids Corner

Seatbelts

Fall season is here and for many children that means time for Halloween. In 2016, Americans spent $8.4 billion on Halloween costumes, candy and decorations. On average, consumers spent $83 per person. It has been estimated that 36 million children, ages 5-13 will go trick-or-treating. Children are more than twice as likely to be hit by a car and killed on Halloween, than on any other day of the year.

Fall Season Safety Tips
- Always walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible.
- Children should walk on direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Teach children at an early age to put down their devices and then look left, right and left again when crossing the street.
- Remind children to make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street and watch out for cars that are turning or backing up. Teach them not to run or dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.
- Children under ten should cross the street with an adult. Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for children to judge speed and distance of cars until age ten.

Halloween Safety Tips
- If dressing up for Halloween, be sure that the costume does not interfere with the ability to see. Wear well-fitting masks, costumes and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips and falls.
- Avoid costumes all in black and provide children with some type of reflective tape, reflector, flash light and/or glow-stick.
- Children should be trick-or-treating with an adult or in a group, depending on the neighborhood and maturity/age of child.

The Sharing Corner

The Sharing Corner is for you, by you. Share your expertise, celebrations, testimonies and news. Send an email with the information you would like to share to Wenda Deardorff.”
**Family Support Webinars**
First Wednesday of the month
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM
Nov 1 Community PASSPORTs: A Way to Make Connections
Dec 6 TBA

**Parents as Teachers International Conference 2017**

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**Parents as Teachers**

Until one month prior to the event, registration will only be open to Pennsylvania participants. If you have a new hire in the month before the event, contact Wenda Deardorff.

**PAT Foundational & Model Implementation**
For new parent educators & supervisors of affiliate programs
Jan 22-26 Camp Hill, Pa.

**PAT Foundational**
For new approved users
Jan 22-24 Camp Hill, Pa.

**PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten**
Feb 26-27 Camp Hill, Pa.

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Family Support at the Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children’s Trust Fund grantees and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers is based at the Center for Schools and Communities. Learn more at the following sites:

Children's Trust Fund
Strengthening Families