



Parents as Teachers®

Baby FACE Qualitative Evaluation

Parents as Teachers National Center

Since 2010, Parents as Teachers National Center has been implementing the Baby FACE program – a home visiting program for American Indian families with children prenatal to age three – in 20 rural, tribal communities in six states.

In the fall of 2014, Wilder Research conducted a qualitative evaluation to explain the factors that promote or impede high quality implementation, and how high quality implementation fosters positive outcomes for families. The evaluation included phone interviews with 44 staff members and focus groups with 90 parents in eight sites. The following are key impacts.

Key impacts

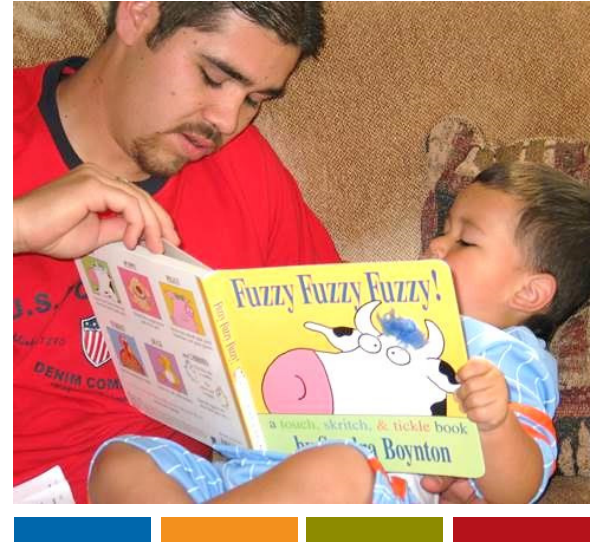
Children in the program are meeting development milestones and developing school readiness skills.

Parent educators and parents both reported observing children meeting developmental milestones, including social-emotional and physical development, as well as pre-literacy and school readiness skills, as indicated by health and development screenings. These skills are preparing students for preschool and kindergarten; several parent educators provided specific examples of how children in the program were outperforming other children their age in terms of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. The curriculum's activities, as well as the books provided through the program and parents' engaging with their children in reading and other activities are all contributing to children's development.

I believe an example is a family where one child now aged out, four years old, and she is reading the books . . . to her little baby brother [who is] 6 months old. It enhances the cognitive skills. She was pointing to the pictures of what the book said. She is definitely school ready.

I would say the children who have gone through Baby FACE would be more ready to enter kindergarten. One of the biggest challenges is accepting children who do not have a large vocabulary, do not know how to hold a pencil, not being able to converse. But the babies who come through this program are able to do all of that.

Sometimes we help in the kindergarten classroom here, and we see that those who have not been to any Head Start or to Baby FACE, they are struggling, but that for our kids, it is going to be an easy transition. And that it is going to be a big impact on the school. The preschool they are going to, the teachers there are all excited about seeing them.



Developmental delays are identified early.

Children who are not meeting age-appropriate milestones are identified early, so parents can work on activities to build these skills or be provided a referral, if outside help is needed.

The screenings play a big role in early intervention for things like hearing problems or if there are any vision problems, even social-emotional problems. All are very good at detecting for early intervention before the child gets to school.

We can catch if there is a delay in a child. We can catch it early enough to be able to work on it. And if there are resources in the community, we can get them to help them with their child.

If we had a child with a delay, I would know from the ASQ, and we would have the intervention activity for it for each age.

Participating parents have increased confidence and parenting skills.

Parents are learning about developmental milestones and activities that can be done with their child to promote their child's growth in each developmental area. Parents and other family members are talking with and engaging with their children. Parents are feeling more confident as parents and advocating for their children. They are also learning other parenting strategies to address discipline, feeding, potty training, sleeping, and choosing child care or preparing for kindergarten transition.

[Success] is knowing that the parent has taken the role [of] the child's first teacher, and they are guiding them, disciplining them, showing them activities, reading to them, playing games with them. And when the child gets the activity, picks up the lesson, then they are all excited, and you know you have done something well. And getting the feedback from the families on the next visit. They tell you what they did, and they show you; you know that they understand what that whole activity was about. You are giving it back to them and helping them look for ways they can do things. They have resources right there, in their homes, to make things. And they can make up their own stories, without always having an actual book in their hand. The excitement is there.

Family well-being overall has improved.

Encouragement from parent educators and the goal-setting done through the program has played a role in helping some parents obtain employment, obtain diplomas and degrees, increase stability through regular routines, stabilize their housing, increase father's involvement, or improve communication between parents. Parent educators link families with Tribal and other resources, as needed, needed to help families improve their well-being.

[Parent educators are] motivating parents to go to school or find jobs. We have had a lot of parents that have gone that way. That has been a big plus, for families to be more financially secure, or better educated to become more secure. That is going to have a big impact on the families, is going to help the kids. If you get out of poverty, you are going to have a better chance in life. Parents have taken the advice of the parent educators to better themselves.

We have a referral process we have to use. We fill out the referral forms and then will give them handouts, and if you have a flyer or brochure on that program, you would give it to the family.

Implementation successes and challenges

To be effective, programs need time to establish trust with participants.

To successfully achieve these impacts, parents and parent educators must develop trusting personal relationships. Some parents were more hesitant to trust a stranger in their home and were not expecting a program in which they had to actively participate. Parent educators that were already well known in their communities or had a previous job that connected with families had a head start in developing trusting relationships. Through persistence, parent educators were able to reach less willing parents by continuing to visit or mail information. Parent educators were able to engage some unwilling families after months, or even years, of dropping off materials and holding “porch visits.”

Building a strong, good, trusting relationship with the family. They invite me in and offer me coffee, juice, or water. We discuss how things are going, how many times they use the books, if they are doing the activity, getting to know the parents, building a strong relationship with my clients.

Families experiencing multiple family crises challenge parent engagement.

Families immersed in meeting their basic needs and addressing their crises cannot fully engage in the program. Parent educators were challenged to serve families that were not home for their appointments, or moving constantly to obtain jobs. Some found creative ways to serve these families by mailing materials, connecting via text messages, or reconnecting with families when they were ready. Parent educators had a challenging job, often similar to that of a therapist or social worker, to work with families not only on child development activities, but also addressing other difficult personal issues.

Some are struggling with housing and some are running from the law. This is just one more thing to have to make happen in their day, and it is not a priority when they don't have housing, [or] don't know where their meals are coming from.

Families benefit from group activities.

When transportation barriers were removed and families were able to attend Family Circles, they were able to connect with other parents. Through these connections parents could share effective parenting techniques and receive support and encouragement to help them overcome parenting challenges. Family Circles also provided opportunities for children to interact and develop social skills.

You learn from other parents, you're not the only one struggling with things, you learn you knew them in high school, or you talk about joining track. [This is] nice because parents are from all different walks, they're talking to your kids, like a big group taking care of each other, putting families together, we are all one whether you like it or not, we can all help each other.

Books and necessary household items engage families and promote school readiness.

Families were, in part, drawn to the program for the free books and other baby items and household supplies that were offered as incentives. Children and adults alike loved receiving books and in many cases, the books children received through the program were the only books in the home. Having books in the home encouraged children's interest in reading and also increased parents reading to their children, a key stepping stone to school readiness.

They bring incentives because that really helps, like first aid kits, bug sprays, things we can't get, like coffee (laughs); it's like a little treat that we get.

Free books. We actually got a book case; that was surprising for me. We used to just stack books in the corner.

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For more information

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For more information

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