

# Parent Time

## Parent Time is:

- adult time for learning, planning, and reflecting;
- facilitated sessions that support parents as their children's teachers;
- one-to-one and group discussions;
- time for parents to establish and build relationships with other adults, fostering a sense of community; and
- individualized learning, exploration that advances parenting and personal growth.

Parent Time in family literacy programs provides training for parents that helps them be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children. It is a vital component in FACE and is held for one hour a day.

**In Parent Time, adult family members have the opportunity to identify topics of interest and learn new skills and information that help them reach their potential as individuals and as members of their families, their children's schools, and their communities.**

## Classroom Parent Time

### Topics

Topics arise from a variety of sources, including:

- parent interests, needs, and goals;
- FACE team ideas about what parents would benefit from knowing; and
- school and community leaders who have something important to share.

Discover parents' interests, needs, and goals.

- Use the Adult Participation Plan during enrollment and ask adults what parenting topics they are interested in learning more about.
- Have parents complete the FACE Parent Time Survey.
- During orientation, have parents brainstorm ideas for Parent Time sessions as a group.
- Listen and observe every day, and topics for Parent Time sessions will come up naturally.
- During weekly team planning meetings, discuss possible topics for Parent Time sessions based on your knowledge of the families currently enrolled.

### Facilitator(s)

#### Preschool Teacher/Preschool Co-teacher

In addition to the adult education teacher, the FACE preschool teacher and/or co-teacher facilitates Parent Time on a regular basis in the adult education classroom. The preschool

teachers are the experts about preschool and child development and can share this information with the parents. Ideally, the adult education teacher will be able to help plan and co-facilitate these weekly sessions with the preschool teachers. To identify topics, ask:

- What do we want parents to know about the preschool environment, instruction, and assessment?
- How can parents support their children's learning?
- What strategies and approaches can parents use?
- What questions do parents have about how and what their children are learning that we can answer?
- Are there observations from PACT Time that lead to Parent Time topics?

### **Parent Time in Other School Locations**

When a school expert is facilitating Parent Time, it may be possible and appropriate to hold the session in another location in the school. Parent Time sessions may take place in many locations including:

- a library, with the librarian demonstrating literacy strategies;
- a culture room, with the culture teacher as facilitator; and
- a gym, allowing parents to exercise or learn active games to play with their families.

### **Outside Speakers**

Schedule outside experts to facilitate Parent Time when there is a topic that no team member feels comfortable facilitating, and when there is a school or community presenter who understands FACE parents and can increase their knowledge and skills. Outside speakers include school personnel, community members, and representatives from local organizations. Limit outside speakers to once or twice a week.

- Inform outside speakers ahead of time about the specific topic of interest for the Parent Time session and also about who the FACE parents are and the ways they learn best.
- Prepare parents ahead of time for the outside speaker and topic by having them brainstorm what they already know and what they want to learn.
- Follow-up with parents after the outside speaker to reinforce what they learned and to identify next steps.

### **Parents**

Use a strengths-based approach in your FACE program and help parents identify and talk about their unique points of view and talents. Schedule parents to facilitate a Parent Time session in which they guide parents in an activity or teach others something new. Spend some time helping parents plan and practice the session they will facilitate.

## **Learning Activities**

### **Project-Based Learning**

As parents identify topics of interest and curious questions, the adult education teacher can encourage exploration and self-directed learning using classroom, local, and Internet resources.

Provide strategies for note-taking so that parents can keep a record of what they learn. Parents can explore topics individually, in pairs, or small groups. Once their questions have been answered, parents may want to communicate information to others or take actions based on what they learned. This is project-based learning. Some possible outcomes for Parent Time project-based learning include:

- strategies and materials to help their children learn;
- newsletter article for a local publication, webpage or blog site;
- presentation with visuals for a variety of audiences; and
- a bulletin board in a hallway of the school.

## Home/Community Parent Time

### Outside the Classroom

#### **What about parents who cannot attend Parent Time sessions at school?**

As a team, create some strategies to help all parents get Parent Time information, reflect with the FACE team, and interact with other FACE parents.

- Schedule Parent Orientations at times when flex-time parents can attend.
- Schedule essential Parent Time sessions outside the regular school day.
- Schedule monthly individual meetings with each parent.
- Discuss with each parent the best way to send Parent Time information home and the best times to connect via phone, email, etc.

#### **Parent Time at home**

- Prepare and distribute information for parents to explain the purpose of transfer- home and at-home PACT Time activities.
- Distribute materials from Parent Time sessions offered at school to flex-time parents who would benefit.
- Discuss individual family needs and interests with parents and provide information to parents to address them.
- Provide a notebook for parents to keep track of their Parent Time information and reflections.
- Communicate regularly with flex-time parents to discuss PACT Time and Parent Time done at home.

## The Big Picture of Parent Time

#### **Help Parents Understand the Goals of Parent Engagement**

At the beginning of the year, schedule some Parent Time sessions that teach parents what they need to know to fully engage in FACE. For example:

- the goals of PACT Time,
- how children learn,
- why reading is so important,

- choosing books for children,
- dialogic reading,
- stages of children's growth and development,
- preschool curriculum/FACE Early Childhood Standards, and
- what kindergarten means.

### **Group Dynamics**

Parent Time provides an opportunity for the FACE team to create positive group dynamics and supportive relationships among parents.

- Establish group communication guidelines like confidentiality and respectfulness.
- Facilitate teambuilding activities.
- Encourage listening to understand and respond in non-judgmental ways.
- Guide parents to reflect on their experiences.
- Identify strengths and develop parent leadership.

### **Overall**

Be sure to vary topics, facilitators, activities, and learning strategies over time. This will keep Parent Time exciting and maintain parent interest. Use the FACE Parent Time Log to categorize topics and assist the team in reflecting on how the topics scheduled for Parent Time cover a wide scope of interest including early childhood development, language and culture, health and nutrition, and adult life skills.