

Overview of organization & leadership: The ParentChild+ model was developed in 1965 by Dr. Phyllis Levenstein, an educational psychologist, whose dissertation focused on reducing high school dropout rates by working with young families. In 1978, ParentChild+ was incorporated as a non-profit to expand its evidence-based program model. The National Center now supports 142 local partner agencies in 15 states and six countries. This year, we are working with over 9,000 families, completing over 350,000 virtual and in-person home visits.



The program is unique in the following ways:

- The ParentChild+ model is the missing piece in the continuum of support for families, filling the gap in services for 2-3-year-olds.
- The model works with the whole family, focusing on parents and children together.
- ParentChild+ hires local staff from the communities in which we work, ensuring a linguistic and cultural match between staff and families.

The ParentChild+ National Center senior staff has an average tenure of ten+ years and expertise in federal/state education and early childhood policy, research and evaluation, early childhood development, parenting education, fundraising, and strategic growth. [Sarah Walzer](#), CEO, has been leading ParentChild+ for 23 years, growing it from a staff of 1 to 21, from 30 local partner agencies to 142. [Anita Stewart](#), Chief Development and Strategic Partnerships Officer, focuses on growth via new partnerships and funding sources.

Problem addressed: A child only has 1,500 days before entering kindergarten, days critical to early brain development, yet in the U.S. 52% of children in low-income communities are not ready for kindergarten. Children not ready often remain behind and are more likely to drop out. We must make the connection between quality early childhood education and future success by providing critical supports.

ParentChild+ families have been hit hardest by COVID-19 and will feel the economic impacts for months, maybe years, to come. A national report found that 72% of Latinx families, and 60% of African American families, are experiencing "serious financial problems" due to COVID-19, compared to 36% of white Americans.

Families are worried about access to basic needs. Where will they get next week's food and diapers? The fears in the immigrant community are even more significant, with parents avoiding medical help, food pantries, and picking-up meals for their children.

ParentChild+ works in the communities facing the greatest adversity, and our family demographics reflect this - over 80% of program families report incomes of \$25,000 or less annually, with 30% under \$10,000; 69% of participating parents were born outside of the United States; 67% of participating children speak a home language other than English; 39% are Black/African American, 36% Hispanic and/or Latinx, 12% Asian, 6% White, 3% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2% two or more races, and 2% other.

Solution provided: ParentChild+ is an evidence-based school readiness model that preempts the equity gap by providing young children and their parents with learning tools and skills. The program is based on four pillars:

- *Reaching families where they are:* Families with young children receive 92 twice-weekly 30-minute home/virtual visits to support healthy development and educational success.
- *Building trust:* Our national network of program sites hires community-based Early Learning Specialists (ELs) who share a linguistic and cultural background with the families with whom they work. 25% of ELs are former program parents.
- *Promoting parent-child interaction:* ELs provide families with high quality learning tools and guidance to stimulate parent-child interaction, develop language, early literacy, and social-emotional skills, and build school readiness.
- *Facilitating strong community connections:* ELs become trusted advisors, connecting families to community resources including health care and educational services, food, diapers, formula, and housing supports, basic needs especially critical during COVID-19.

ParentChild+ engages early in life, helping young children and their parents access a path to possibility. We provide not only early literacy and school readiness supports, but most importantly early opportunity. As a result of the impact of COVID, we have made essential adaptations. Families are receiving virtual visits and critical support accessing needed goods. Our goal is to reach more families as needs increase. [Click here to watch a video detailing our work to date across the country in the COVID context.](#)

In response to recent events and our growing understanding of the devastating impacts of systematic racism, we have begun a thorough review of our staffing, board, training, and curriculum. [Working with our board and local site staff from across the country we are embedding race equity principles across our work.](#)

Program Impact: Program participants have 30% higher high school graduation rates than their peers. Graduates: are 50% more likely to be prepared for kindergarten than their socio-economic peers; enter school performing 10 months above their chronological age; scored two times higher on social-emotional skills, are 50% less likely to need special education services by third grade; and outperformed the statewide average on third grade state math achievement tests.

Our emergency supports and virtual visits are all part of ensuring the health and well-being of young families during the ongoing crisis. ParentChild+ is uniquely situated to do this work, because of our deep community ties and strong family relationships. We are well-positioned to be an ongoing extended safety net and source of support for families in the coming year, continuing to work with families virtually until it is safe to meet in person and continuing to build-out our virtual supports to help access emergency funding, information, and resources for staff and families. We will also be continuing to convene groups of site staff and parents for input on improving the virtual work and identifying the components we would like to retain post-COVID.

Proposed Use of Funds: *ParentChild+ respectfully requests \$50,000 in general operating dollars to help support staff capacity to continue the adaptation, continuous learning, and evaluation of our virtual models across our network of 142 sites and over 9,000 families. This work will focus on which aspects will be key to enhancing and expanding our models as we return to in-person visits. We*

will be taking a two-prong approach: content and training enrichment that can occur as sites respond to the increasing needs due to unprecedented trauma, and the incorporation of the knowledge gained this year into the fabric of our programming and expansion going forward.

During this grant period we will:

- Continue to adjust our models to ensure that we are supporting families in powerful and creative ways critical to their children’s well-being and healthy development. Our goal is to continue to reach more families as needs increase.
- Expand avenues for input from the diverse voices of our field staff and partners, as well as the families and communities we work with (focus groups, surveys, virtual brainstorming, cross-site discussions, communities of practice), to assess how our virtual approach is working. We will continue to support continuous improvement and co-create (with the site staff) enriched training, curriculum, and additional supports addressing our virtual and future mixed-method models as we go forward.
- Conduct data collection and research to assess the impact of COVID-19 and virtual program implementation on our families, including social-emotional, cognitive development, and parent-child interaction.
 - We have successfully pivoted to virtual visits, building out our role as key connectors providing access to food, diapers, rent, and technology. Although we are seeing unanticipated benefits of virtual visiting (parents taking the lead, engaging more fathers), it is, for the most part, an untested modality. We hope to launch critical research to better understand how it can enable us to enrich and expand our work post-COVID, providing more, better supports for families. In the coming year, we plan to roll out phase one of this research, an implementation study, working with an external research partner to identify the key elements of virtual visits.

The reality of the pandemic is that we will have a whole group of children transitioning into our education system having faced unprecedented levels of isolation and economic trauma. They will not have an opportunity to redo their two- and three-year-old years. Today, as needs increase, it is imperative that we support as many as families as possible to ensure that all children have *equal possibilities from the start, no matter what.*

