Parent Empowerment Project

OVERVIEW

The Parent Empowerment Project (PEP) is a comprehensive, culturally-relevant, self-discovery curriculum for parents and guardians to improve their effectiveness as the primary positive influence in the lives of their children. The National Black Child Development Institute initially worked directly with parents in a three-year demonstration project to develop the curriculum, which was then pilot tested in settings all across the country. The current content and principles of PEP 2.0 reflect what parents and family facilitators said they needed in a parenting curriculum.

The Parent Empowerment Program empowers parents to succeed and reinforces parents’ sense of pride in themselves, their community and their history. PEP is built upon four guiding principles:

1. Parents want what is best for their children.
2. Parents know best what they need to be better parents.
3. Parents learn best when they are involved in selecting the topics and activities they want to focus on.
4. Given the proper information and resources, parents will make the best choices for their children.

PEP is comprised of 6 topic areas with clear curriculum objectives, and a range of interactive and culturally-based activities that encourage parents to reflect on and improve their parenting practices:

- Topic 1: Reflections
- Topic 2: Health and Wellness
- Topic 3: Child Growth and Development
- Topic 4: Positive Guidance
- Topic 5: Literacy
- Topic 6: Transition to Early Care & Education

The PEP curriculum is designed to be delivered to parents in a series of approximately 2-hour parent group sessions organized and led by trained PEP family facilitators in the context of an empowering culture that:

- Treats parents with respect
- Believes that parents value education and want their children to reach their fullest potential
- Supports the entire/extended family
- Establishes an inviting family gathering place
- Establishes ground rules with the parent group
- Embraces sound adult learning practices for all parent learning opportunities
- Provides ample opportunities for networking and information sharing
THE CURRICULUM
PEP is based on the premise that all parents have the potential to successfully care for their children. The curriculum empowers parents to succeed by gaining insight into key aspects of parental care and education during these pivotal years and learning strategies that provide their children with an opportunity for maximum growth and learning experiences.

PEP focuses on techniques that teach basic skills and encourage parental involvement in the healthy growth and development of their children. Participants learn positive techniques that maximize their own success as parents. They become aware of the key role they play as their child’s first and most important teacher and receive that support they need to comfortably embrace their responsibility as the pivotal person in the lives of their children. PEP is designed to help parents prepare their children for a successful first educational experience through development of language and early literacy. It’s intended to provide the ongoing reinforcement that nurtures the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children.

PEP also informs and reinforces the parent’s sense of pride in themselves, their community and their history. When history is unknown or ignored, feelings of self-worth are diminished. Knowledge of the past provides the powerful inspiration for present and future progress.

When PEP is fully implemented, the following outcomes have been achieved with parents:
- A respectful relationship within the parent group that is based on trust and caring.
- Changes in parenting behaviors that positively impact their children’s cognitive and social development.
- A conscious awareness of parents’ role as their child’s first teacher.
- Positive behavior change in the way parents function with their children and within their families.

TOPICS
Each topic contains at least two African American Culture activities. These activities provide a cultural context for parent training that encourages parents to learn about and expose their children to the richness of their cultural heritage. The interweaving of the culture component provides an essential dimension to the learning process that builds parents’ confidence, motivation, and self-esteem.

Through learning about their rich cultural heritage, parents gain a unique understanding of the opportunity they have to develop their children’s potential.

The Parent Empowerment Project curriculum is organized into six topics:

TOPIC ONE: Reflections challenges parents to examine how family values and traditions are an integral part of their daily routine and how their parenting techniques have evolved from experiences in their own background. By examining these influences, parents can begin to make rational choices about what to reshape from their past and develop parenting strategies that work for them and their children.

TOPIC TWO: Health and Wellness provides strategies to encourage healthy behaviors in children and families. Parents learn how a balanced diet and daily physical activity helps children develop healthy
minds and bodies. Parents also identify physically and mentally safe environments where their children will thrive. Everyday examples of healthy practices are provided.

**TOPIC THREE: Child Development** provides parents with information about the key growth and development stages of children. Parents learn how to be active participants in ensuring their child’s healthy growth and development. By being aware of what to expect as their children grow and understanding that all children do not develop at the same pace, parents can provide the necessary nurturing and teaching that is crucial to healthy child development, as well as alleviating any fears about whether their children are “normal.”

**TOPIC FOUR: Positive Guidance** helps parents to guide their children’s actions toward more positive and less inappropriate behavior. Parents have a chance to explore the experiences of negative and positive responses to children’s behavior and consider the many positive options available for practicing the “art” of positive guidance.

**TOPIC FIVE: Literacy** provides parents with an overview of how children develop literacy skills and the importance of literacy development in early childhood. It also prepares parents to be able to create literacy-rich environments and experiences.

**TOPIC SIX: Transition to Early Care and Education Programs** assists parents in preparing emotionally for the time when children “leave the nest” to enroll in an early care and education program. The major focus is on providing a framework which parents can use to take a proactive role in selecting appropriate programs, monitoring the environment in which they place their child, and preparing for an ongoing role in their child’s educational life.