



# Missouri Parents as Teachers: Summary Report for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) department at The University of Oklahoma analyzed data collected from two Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) supported information-gathering efforts investigating attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. A web-based quantitative and qualitative questionnaire of 502 parent educators, administrators, and program coordinators took place from December 9, 2014 to January 12, 2015. Six follow-up roundtable discussion sessions at six different locations throughout Missouri (Jefferson City, Brookfield, Springfield, Liberty, Cape Girardeau, and St. Peters) took place from January 8, 2015 through January 23, 2015. A total of 173 responses were collected from the roundtable discussions covering four different discussion topics.

### **Purpose**

These data collection efforts provided information for DESE's PAT administrative manual, which outlines requirements for funding from the department for PAT programs in Missouri public schools.

### **Summary of Results**

Major findings from the web-based quantitative and qualitative questionnaires were:

- PAT parent educators, program coordinators, and administrators identified the most critical function of PAT as parent education, followed by preparing children for school. These two functions stood out in importance across all three roles. Several educators expressed concerns that increased demands of family wellness removed much needed focus from activities and learning time that should be devoted to school readiness.
- PAT educators and administrators frequently mentioned the loss of funding of Group connections—a program requirement. The majority of respondents who mentioned this program component valued it as a venue for family networking and peer support as well as a natural learning environment for all family members together.
- Much of the respondent narrative described parent educator shortages, staff turnover, and difficulties recruiting to fill parent educator positions. Job descriptions for the parent educator role were described, in great variety, as part-time, full-time, and overtime; as one position shared across three roles (also administrator and coordinator), as one position in a district, or as one of several similar positions.
- One of the strongest themes pertained to universal access to PAT program services. The very specific definition of high-needs used to establish PAT eligibility excludes families who, while they have needs based on other criteria, must obtain services within the lower range of PAT's 75%/25% allocation formula.

Major findings from the roundtable discussion data were:

- An overwhelming majority of discussion participants were in favor of PAT program efforts serving all families and not just those families with the highest need. Many advantages to serving all families were suggested, while the only notable disadvantage to serving all families was the difficulty in funding an expanded program.
- A large majority of participants believed the most desirable outcomes from PAT participation were empowered parents (i.e., parents that are confident and able to assist in their child's education) and early identification/intervention of children.
- Two suggestions for ways in which PAT programs can maintain high quality were to allocate more funds and have consistency in policy between PAT and other organizations and departments. While funding will remain challenging, addressing consistency in policy can offer the ancillary benefit of increasing communication with other organizations.
- Participants felt that the most effective use of potential increased funds was to alter the reimbursement policies. Many participants in several topic areas mentioned reimbursement issues and contrast between single child and single-family cost reimbursements.

### **Conclusion**

Results of DESE's data collection suggest that stakeholders across Missouri are committed to the PAT program and would like to offer services to all families rather than to those families identified as high-need. Stakeholders feel that the PAT program is successful in empowering parents and helping them become advocates for their children. Stakeholders also expressed concern over challenges and limits to funding, how funding limitations impact staffing, and how funding increases could allow reimbursement policies to be altered to allow for differences in single-child and single-family cost reimbursements.

## Introduction

---

The following report summarizes survey and focus group interview data related to the review and evaluation of the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by the Missouri Office of Early and Extended Learning staff between December 2014 and January 2015, and analyzed by the Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) department at The University of Oklahoma.

Data were collected in two stages. Stage 1 of the data collection effort involved the development of an online survey instrument made up of quantitative and qualitative questions related to the perceived critical functions of PAT, beliefs about desired outcomes from participation in PAT, and suggestions about ways the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) could support PAT program efforts. Surveys were distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey to Missouri school district administrators who then passed survey links along to PAT educators. Including district administrators and PAT educators, there were a total of about 1,500 potential respondents.

Stage 2 of the data collection effort involved the collection of focus group data from regional roundtable discussions with school district administrator representatives. Meeting locations were chosen based on travel distance and proximity to population centers. Ultimately, a total of six sessions were held at the following locations: Jefferson City on January 8; Brookfield on January 9; Springfield on January 15; Liberty on January 15; Cape Girardeau on January 22; and St. Peters on January 23. Each roundtable discussion covered four main topic areas (1- Desired outcomes from PAT program participation; 2- Support for PAT programs and affiliates; 3- Whether PAT should focus on high-needs clients; and 4- Leveraging resources to maximize the positive impact of PAT program efforts). Session participants were assigned a topic group and asked to discuss the topic with four to nine other group members before reporting out to the larger group, which ranged from 16 to 36 participants. Individual opinions to the assigned topic group were captured by handwritten responses to an open-ended question associated with that topic area. Including all locations and topics, there were a total of 173 responses.

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of the data collection efforts summarized in this report was to provide information regarding updates for DESE's PAT administrative manual. The administrative manual outlines requirements for funding from the department for PAT programs in Missouri public schools. This summary is intended to provide information about the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions of survey and focus group participants to decision makers and DESE staff related to the data collection efforts. Therefore no explicit recommendations are made in this summary.

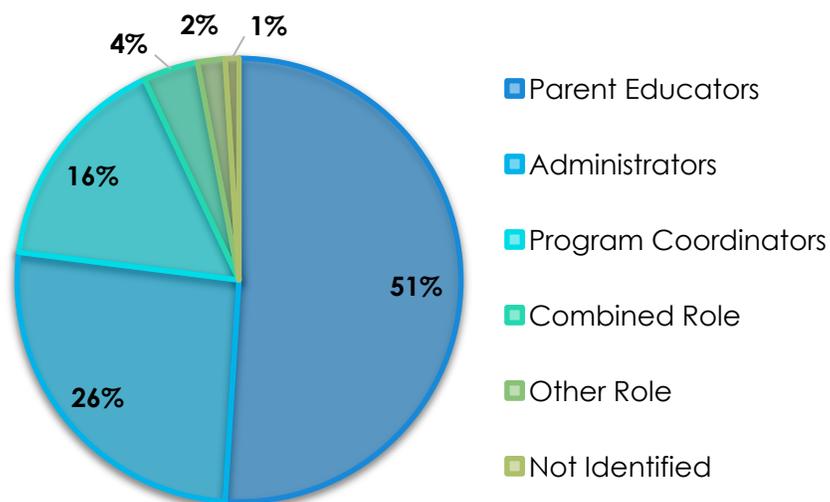
### **Report Outline**

This report is presented in three parts. Part 1 summarizes data from the SurveyMonkey survey effort. Part 2 summarizes data from the focus group discussions. And Part 3 is a discussion and conclusion summarizing all the data and discussing the broader themes that emerged from the data collection efforts.

## Part 1: Online Survey Results

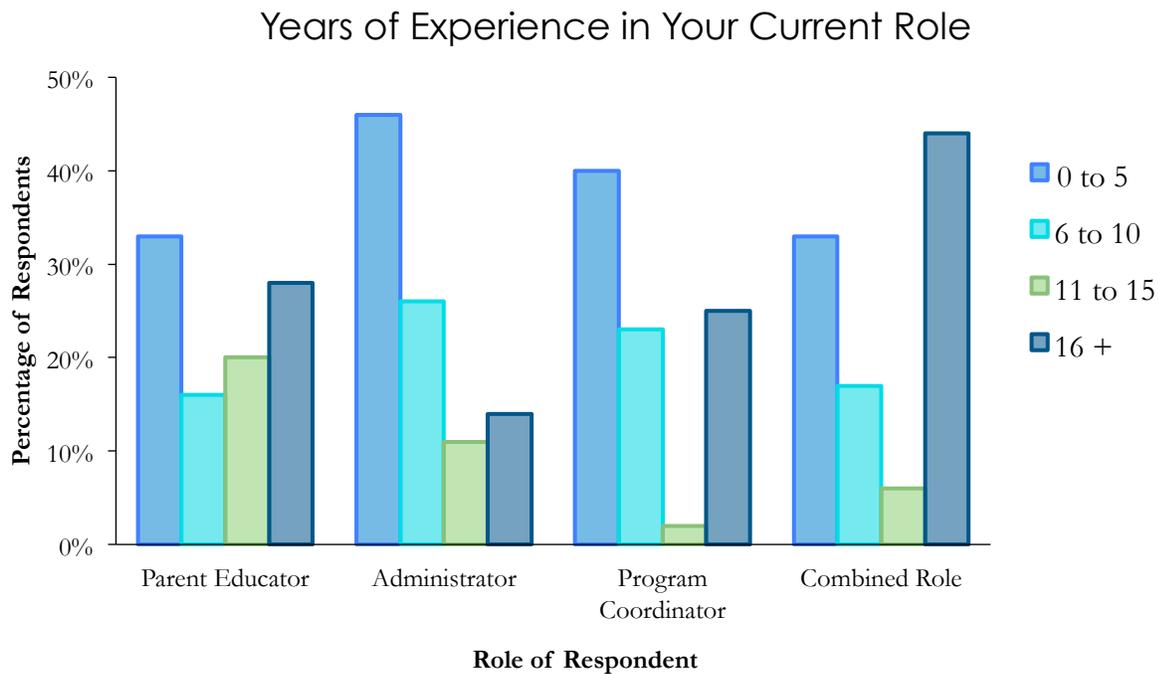
SurveyMonkey respondents consisted primarily of parent educators (n = 256, 51%), followed by school administrators (n = 131, 26%), program coordinators (n = 83, 16%), a combination of those roles (n = 18, 4%), other roles, e.g., administrative assistants, testers (n = 8, 2%), or unidentified roles (n = 6, 1%). As shown in Figure 1, approximately half of the respondents were parent educators and just over one-fourth were school administrators. This distribution provides for multiple perspectives of the critical functions of PAT, desired outcomes for children and families resulting from participation in the program, and a broad assessment of the program elements, features, and supports with regard to achieving those outcomes.

What is your role with Parents as Teachers?



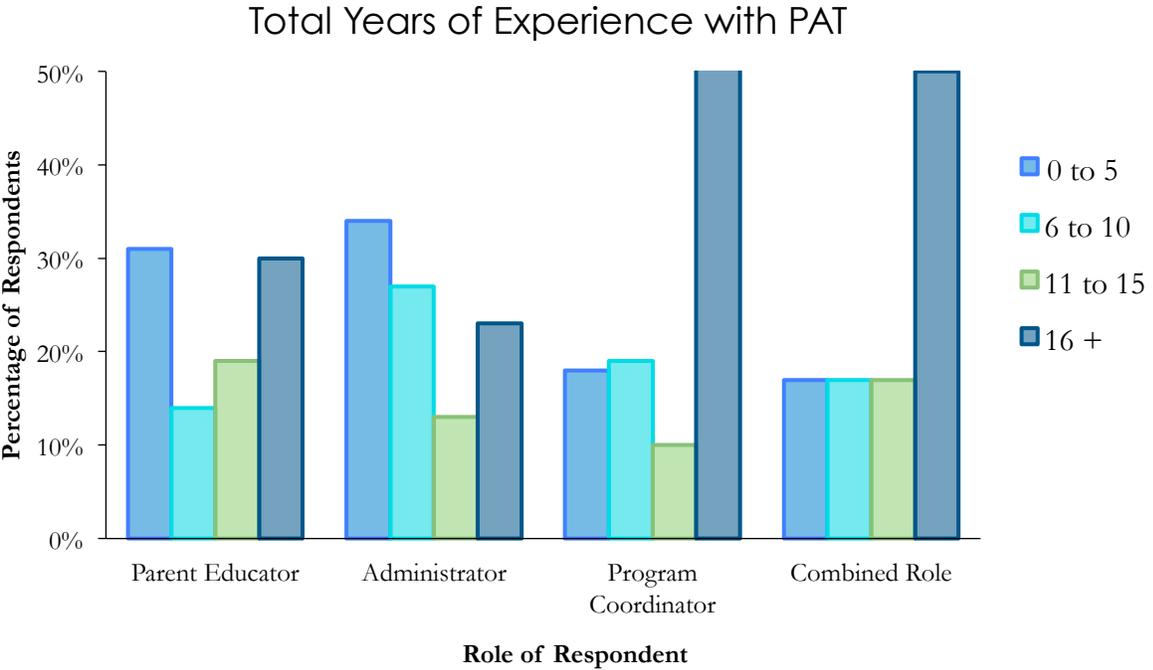
**Figure 1: Summary of the roles of survey respondents with the PAT program.**

The survey included questions pertaining to years of experience in the PAT program overall, and years of experience functioning in their current role as parent educators, administrators, program coordinators, or other roles. More than one-third of the respondents overall (39%) said they were in their current role for five years or less. Figure 2 indicates that a large portion of these less experienced individuals function in the role of administrator (46% indicating five years or less) and program coordinators (40% indicating five years or less of experience in this role).

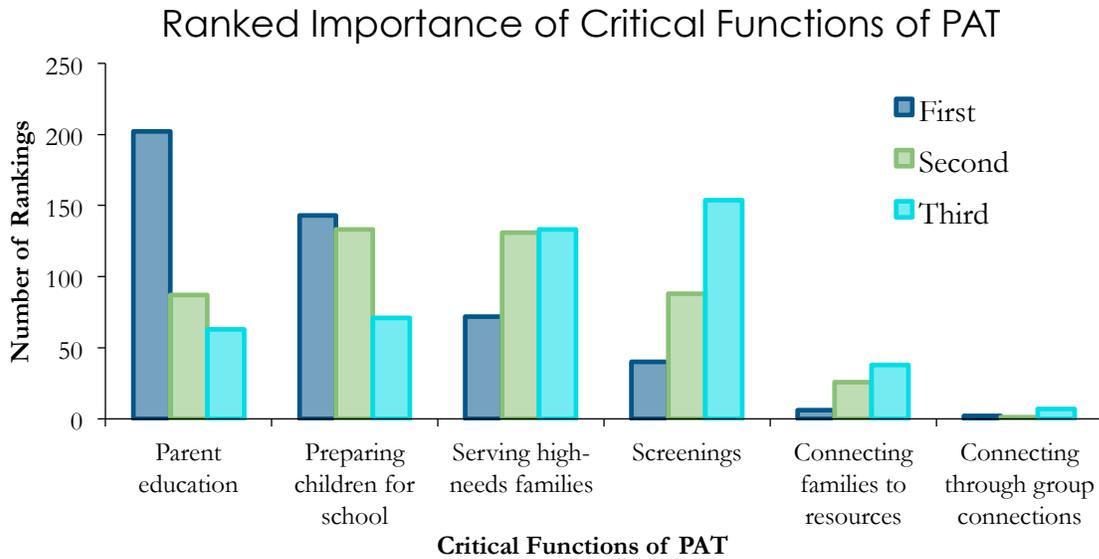


**Figure 2: Summary of respondent years of experience in their current role (n = 483).**

With regard to years of experience overall, the respondent pool represents largely PAT personnel who are highly experienced, having sixteen or more years with the program, and the less experienced, with five or fewer years in the program. These two categories account for 64% of the 483 respondents answering this question. About one-third (34%) of the respondents indicated they have sixteen or more years of experience with the PAT program (Figure 3). A large proportion of these highly experienced individuals currently hold the position of program coordinator (53% of those currently in this role at 16+ years) or play a combined role of parent educator, administrator, and/or program coordinator (50% of those currently in this role at 16+ years).



**Figure 3: Summary of total survey respondent years of experience with the PAT program (n = 483).**



**Figure 4: Summary of ranked importance of critical functions of PAT (n = 465).**

Survey respondents were provided a list of six Critical Functions of PAT and asked to rank them in order of importance. Figure 4 displays the number of respondents that gave 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place rankings to each of the six critical functions of PAT. As shown in Figure 4, 202 respondents indicated “Parent Education” was the most critical function of PAT, 143 respondents indicated “Preparing children for learning and success in school” was most important, 72 respondents indicated “Serving and supporting high-need families” was most important, and “Screenings” received 40 votes as the most important critical function of PAT. Of lesser importance were two items, “Connecting families to resources” and “Connecting families through Group Connections,” which received 6 and 2 respective votes as the most important critical function of PAT.

Ninety-six of the survey respondents identified critical functions other than those listed and ranked in Figure 4. These are summarized in Table 1. More than one in four people of those listing other critical functions identified the relationship/partnership between parents or families and schools (26, n = 24%) as another critical function of PAT. Similar to parent education, which was provided in the ranking question above, were various responses related to parenting skills development (n = 22, 23%). Also mentioned was the need for early identification of special needs and special needs resources (n = 12, 13%), which is similar to the ranking response regarding screening, and other family supports (n = 12, 13%). Nearly one-fourth of respondents expressed concern about serving all families (n = 23, 24%) and not just high-needs families.

**Table 1: Other Critical Functions of PAT**

Critical Function	n*	%
Relationship/partnership between parents/families and schools	26	27%
Serving all families	23	24%
Parenting skills development	22	23%
Other parenting supports (confidence, mental health, empowerment)	13	14%
Other family supports (well-being emotional, teens, recruitment)	12	13%
Early identification of special needs and special needs resources	12	13%

\*N = 96

The next portion of Part 1 consists of responses to four open-ended questions:

1. For children and families, what are the desired outcomes from participation in PAT?
2. What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc., support the desired outcomes?
3. What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc., are not aligned with the desired outcomes?
4. What ways could DESE better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts?

The following eight tables in Part 1 (Table 2 through Table 9) summarize the qualitative response portions of the SurveyMonkey survey. These address four survey questions using two tables each. One table summarizes the frequency of response themes, and one table gives examples of those response themes made by each respondent category (i.e., parent educator, program coordinator, administrator).

The first question in this series received responses from 372 of the 502 survey participants. Table 2 provides a listing of outcome themes derived from an exhaustive review of the open-ended responses. The themes are listed in descending order according to the percentage of respondents that mentioned them. Themes are generally related to child-specific outcomes, parent outcomes, family outcomes, and intervention/special needs. The most frequently mentioned desired outcome theme was School readiness/transition to Kindergarten, which was mentioned by 38% of respondents. Other child-specific outcomes include Age appropriate expectations (n = 79, 21%), and Child's success in school (n = 75, 20%). Parent specific outcomes identified in Question 1 include Specified skills--child development/literacy/intellectual/language (n = 106, 10%), closely related Parent education/knowledge and skills (n = 101, 28%), Parent supports and resources (n = 95, 25%), Parents as educators/child advocates (n = 89, 24%), Parent confidence/empowerment (n = 45, 12%), and Parent-child interaction/role in child's success (n = 49, 13%). Family related themes include Family health and well-being (n = 68, 18%), Family resources and supports (n = 59, 16%), and Relationship with school (n = 26, 7%). Intervention/special needs related themes in outcomes include Identifying

needs/challenges/problems (n = 45, 12%), and Early intervention through screening (n = 36, 10%). Other themes mentioned by few respondents include Child abuse and neglect, Environment, and Protective factors. Table 3 provides exemplary quotes drawn from the open-ended responses.

**Table 2: Responses to Survey Question 1 – For children and families, what are the desired outcomes from participation in PAT?**

Major Theme	n*	%
School readiness/transition to Kindergarten	140	38%
Skills—child development/literacy/intellectual/language	106	28%
Parent education/knowledge and skills	101	27%
Parent supports and resources	95	25%
Parents as educators/child advocates	89	24%
Age appropriate milestones/expectations	79	21%
Child's success in school	75	20%
Family health and well-being	68	18%
Family resources and supports	59	16%
Parent—child interaction/role in child's success	49	13%
Parent confidence/empowerment	45	12%
Identifying needs/challenges/problems	45	12%
Early intervention through screening	36	10%
Relationship with school	26	7%

\*N = 373

**Table 3: Exemplary quotes to Survey Question 1 – For children and families, what are the desired outcomes from participation in PAT?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
School readiness/ transition to Kindergarten	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents are looking for support in effective parenting practices, as well as a gauge of developmental milestones and school readiness."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "The desired outcomes are school readiness, parental knowledge in child development, resources such as First Steps, Early Childhood Special Education services, and community resources as well."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Parents are knowledgeable about their child's development...Children who need intervention services to prepare them for school readiness, are identified and connected to resources."</p>
Skills—child development/ literacy/intellectual/language	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Increased parenting knowledge and child development information; earlier intervention for delays. Getting together with other families to build support and normalize child behaviors."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "I would like for all families to have a better understanding of child development. I feel that if they understand it better that they will be able to identify problems sooner."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "For families to be familiar with child development and what is expected of children as they enter preschool and Kindergarten."</p>
Parent education/ knowledge and skills	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents gain knowledge of child development and are provided with support in areas of need."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Increase parent knowledge about child development, provide ways for parents to utilize the home learning environment to increase developmental skills in all areas...informing them of developmental strengths."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "To increase parent knowledge and education and child development."</p>
Parent supports and resources	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "For parents and caregivers to become connected to resources in the community, being inclined to take action on their own ideas and needs for the well-being of the family, through the information shared."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "To provide resources and help for families to educate their children."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Healthy, connected, empowered families who understand how to access resources and support systems within their community."</p>
Parents as educators/child advocates	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents will understand that they are their child's best first teacher...Parent Educators will support parents to be confident, caring, involved parents."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "Giving parents the tools and understanding of their child's development to help parents become the best first teachers of their children."</p>

	<i>(Administrator):</i> "For parents to learn to be their child's first and best teacher and have best opportunities and resources they can have!"
	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Increased knowledge for parents of age appropriate activities and expectations."
Age appropriate milestones/ expectations	<i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "For parents to become aware and educated on how to nurture their children physically, emotionally, and socially..." <i>(Parent Educator):</i> "For [parents] to be educated on milestones and developmental information...To encourage them to duplicate our age-appropriate activities in the home after we are gone."
Child's success in school	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "For children, a higher level of social competence, confidence in their own abilities, and an early educational foundation that helps to ensure their success in school." <i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "To ensure that children are developing optimally and parents fully understand the importance of healthy parenting practices for their child's physical and emotional well-being and how critical the first years are in determining a child's future success in school and life." <i>(Administrator):</i> "Develop [parental] skills to ensure the best opportunity for success in school."
Family health and well-being	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Family well-being which supports the parent-child relationship. This is necessary for the optimum growth and development of children." <i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "Parents receiving useful information and guidance that leads them to increased family well-being which leads to increased involvement in their child's development and education." <i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "For families to realize how important their role is early in their child's life for their child to have future success in school and the community."
Family resources and supports	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "For all children to have the some opportunities to succeed in school and beyond [and] for the family as a whole to grow and succeed as unit and as well as individuals." <i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Families building their support systems and being support systems to others...Families participating in their child's educational experiences whether at preschool or elementary school." <i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "To provide resources for families to strengthen their family well-being."
Parent—child interaction/role in child's success	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parent interaction with their children from birth. An understanding of expectations of their child's development." <i>(Parent Educator):</i> "For parents to become better observers of their children's development and to learn how to help their children progress in all areas of development through parent-child interactions." <i>(Administrator):</i> "Informing parents of the importance of...interactions with children, learning activities and the importance of reading to and with their children beginning at a young age."

Parent confidence/empowerment	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Empowerment with parenting...Helping parents and children be equipped to make good choices, learn how to think and learn and love learning."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Confidence in selves and the ones who know their child best and being an active participant in their child's learning as they enter kindergarten and beyond."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator):</i> "The main outcome for our program is for parents to have confidence in the parenting skills and for them to provide many literacy opportunities for their children."</p>
Identifying needs/challenges/problems	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents will learn what development to expect at what ages and how to help with that development. Also, to identify any learning problems as early as possible and to connect parents with the resources needed."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents have tools to give their children the best start and have them prepared for school. To catch problems with children early so they can get the help they need during this critical early age."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Identification of special needs...Connecting families with needs to resources that are available. Connecting families with other families."</p>
Early intervention through screening	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "The families will want to know they have done everything possible to prepare the children so they will have success in school. They want access to early intervention, if their child needs it to be prepared to learn in school."</p> <p><i>(Project Coordinator):</i> "Early identification of needs so interventions can take place and enable children to be ready to attend school."</p> <p><i>(Project Coordinator):</i> "Increased parent knowledge of child development...early detection and intervention for developmental delays, building social support and other well-being factors for families."</p>
Relationship with school	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Establish a positive relationship between caregivers and the school district. Increase parent involvement and confidence in the educational development of their child. Increase Kindergarten readiness and academic success."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Making connections to school that will continue once children are school age."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Creating an environment where school and parents can communicate effectively about research-based strategies for instruction. Identify needs early on for all students."</p>

The second question in this series was, "What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc. support the desired outcomes?" The second question received responses from 371 of the 502 survey participants. Table 4 provides a listing of program feature themes derived from a review of the open-ended responses. Again, themes are listed in descending order according to the percentage of respondents that mentioned them. Home visits was identified most often (n = 175, or 47% of respondents), nearly matched in frequency of occurrence by Screening (n = 173, 46% of respondents). In the moderate range of percentage of respondents that mentioned it was Parent education, training,

and professional development (n = 88, 24%), Group connections/parent and family networking and support (n = 77, 21%), Curriculum, handouts, tools, and checklists (n = 74, 20%), and Early intervention/referral to special services (n = 71, 19%). Fewer respondents made mention of Funding (n = 32, or 9%), Parent involvement/partnership in education (n = 21, 6%), and Family well-being/protective factors (n = 18, 5%). In addition, a small number of respondents mentioned all features (n = 31, 8%) supporting the desired outcomes of PAT programming. Other themes were mentioned by a very small number of respondents and include features of Parent educator quality, Parent-child interactions, and Teen meetings. Table 5 provides exemplary quotes drawn from the open-ended responses.

**Table 4: Responses to Survey Question 2 – What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc. support the desired outcomes?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Home visits	175	47%
Screening	173	46%
Parent education, training, and professional development	88	24%
Group connections/parent and family networking and support	77	21%
Curriculum, handouts, tools, and checklists	74	20%
Early intervention/referral to special services	71	19%
Funding	32	9%
<i>All features</i>	31	8%
Parent involvement/partnership in education	21	6%
Family well-being/protective factors	18	5%

\*N = 373

**Table 5: Exemplary quotes to Survey Question 2 – What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc. support the desired outcomes?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Home visits	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parent educators who do home visits. From my 14 years of experience you would not believe the trust these families give us...They trust that I will give them understanding as to why this may be going on and give them ideas on how to resolve it and at other times just assure them this is normal it will pass."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Home visits are very personalized and fun. They include the well- being of the whole family and are flexible so moms don't feel pressured or stressed in the program."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Home visits which provide educational materials to parents (child growth and development) and demonstrations of getting parents involved in activities with their children."</p>
Screening	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "The home visits and the screenings are a vital part of the program and without the necessary funding would be impossible to provide."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "The screenings we do in the home can identify delays early and allow children to have the opportunity to receive early interventions if necessary."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Home visits, screenings, resource and education referrals all help ensure the desired outcome for families and children. Funding that supports screening and home visits for all children allows parent education to effectively impact the lives of children and family."</p>
Parent education, training, and professional development	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parent education and developmental information helps parents to have the tools they need to be the best parents."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "Funding for parent education through DESE and local school funds allow parent educators the opportunity in our district to offer more intense service to families."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Parent educators have degrees and years of service and many hours of professional development and specialized training like any profession."</p>
Group connections/ parent and family networking and support	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Group connections—some parents feel alone or lost, and when they meet other parents, in the same boat they connect with others and feel relief they are not the only ones going through things."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "Group connections- connecting with other parents of children the same age."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Group Connections help parents to form those necessary social relationships with other families."</p>
Curriculum, handouts, tools, and checklists	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "The extensive Foundational Curriculum, which focuses on parenting behaviors/interactions, family protective factors, as well as child development, is a family-centered curriculum which focuses on family well-being, parent-child interaction, and development-centered parenting."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Some of the new features of the curriculum are key to supporting the desired outcomes. Our staff is beginning to</p>

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Curriculum, handouts, tools, and checklists	<p>embrace the concepts that at first seemed very overwhelming. We think the activity pages were a great way to encourage interactions to continue after we left the visit."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator):</i> "The new curriculum supports the outcomes by allowing the educator to discuss and set goals with each family. All the materials are then chosen to match the family's needs. The pace better matches the actual development of the child, which better supports learning. All the services are highly individualized."</p>
Early intervention/referral to special services	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Developmental screenings allow us to make sure children are on track and refer for early intervention children with developmental delays."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Screening is crucial in that early intervention sets children up for better success in school."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator):</i> "The screenings are of so much value because they are a great way to see the child as a whole...their strengths and weaknesses. We can then use this as a tool for referrals if needed or to provide families with custom-designed curriculum that will meet their child's specific needs."</p>
Funding	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Funding, to hire enough parent educators to reach all families."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "The intervention and prevention work we do with all families, prenatal to Kindergarten entry, is a way of setting them on a sure footing, and supports them as they move forward into school and life. Funding to serve all families is important, because every family benefits from this support, and not all high risk families look present that way."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "PAT helps support parents to be the best parents they can be!!! More funding helps with early intervention, which at the end saves hundreds of dollars in interventions if they start early!"</p>
All features	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "All features of Parents As Teachers support the desired outcomes. I believe the home visit is crucial in the success of the program. All parents can benefit from being involved in the PAT program. Screening will help determine what areas of emphasis are necessary for success in school readiness and if remedial or special education programs are required."</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "All of our PAT services support this outcome. Some families benefit the most from screenings and referrals for special services. For other families, they just need parent support and education. All features are equally important, as each family has different needs."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "All features of PAT are important and critical!"</p>
Parent involvement/partnership in education	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Parents become active participants in their children's learning from the start."</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Parents become active partners to ensure the best learning opportunities for children."</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> "Show parents how to be supportive and helpful in child's learning."</p>

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Family wellbeing/protective factors	<p>(Parent Educator): "A family-centered curriculum which focus' on family well-being, parent-child interaction, and development-centered parenting."</p> <p>(Parent Educator): "Focuses on family-protective factors as well as child development."</p> <p>(Parent Educator): "Family well-being enables the parents to better meet children's needs."</p>

The third question of the online survey asked respondents, "What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc., are not aligned with the desired outcomes?" A total of 232 survey participants provided a meaningful response to the question. Table 6 displays the major response themes identified from a review of detailed, open-ended responses.

**Table 6: Responses to Survey Question 3 – What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc. are not aligned with the desired outcomes?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Funding for services	63	27%
Lack of Universal Access	32	14%
Group connections	28	12%
Home visits	27	12%
Typical/Non-high-needs families	21	9%
Family wellbeing focus (not school readiness)	18	8%
High needs family focus excludes families with special needs	17	7%
Assessments/Paperwork requirements	15	6%
Curriculum	14	6%
Parent educator compensation, turnover, shortages	13	6%

\*N = 232

**Table 7: Exemplary quotes from Question 3 – What features of PAT programming, services, funding, etc. are not aligned with the desired outcomes?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Funding for services	<p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “The amount of funding for the PAT program makes it difficult to provide the services and activities that would make the program the most beneficial to families.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “The lack of funding is restricting districts from meeting the essential requirements aligned for Affiliate Status and Model Fidelity.”</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> “Current funding levels are woefully inadequate. The programming and services when fully implemented are sound and designed to meet the needs of the communities in which they are instituted. However, due to funding constraints, partial implementation scratches the surface of the needs within our community.”</p>
Lack of Universal Access	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “In order to serve more families to make PAT more universal and less focused on high needs families, we need to have additional educators.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “The lack of funding does not support universal service to every family that wants to participate in the program.</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “Lack of adequate funding to provide universal services to families prevents programs in Missouri from implementing programming as it is designed and proven to be most beneficial.”</p>
Group connections	<p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “Group Connections seems to be the weakest point, especially without funding for the events. With funding, at least there were resources to make the events more attractive to parents.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “I do feel some funding should be provided for group connections. I think this is an important component of the PAT program and many schools do not have the funds or donations to make good group connections happen.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator Combined):</i> “We are required to have monthly group connections but we are not given additional funds to conduct those group meetings.”</p>
Home visits	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Visits should be based on how many the family are interested in having and will participate in instead of force-feeding those who are supposed to get 18 or 24 visits. Resources would be much better used if we served 4 families with 5 visits each or 2 with 9 visits and not try to do the extreme 18-24 number.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “The only feature that comes to mind is the funding of 18 to 24 home visits for high-needs families as</p>

Home visits	<p>perhaps an excessive number of visits, especially if families have services from some other programs.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Minimum of visits is way too high when the funding isn't there to support the program.”</p>
Typical/Non-high-needs families	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Our district only has the funding for high needs families so our typically developing families are not being served other than a screening unless a concern or delay is found.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “It feels like the emphasis is on High Needs and we are missing the families who would still benefit from services but do not meet a high needs category. Any opportunity to share early childhood development information in those homes is missed.”</p>
Family well-being focus (not school readiness)	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Not yet comfortable with amount of curriculum and going from focusing on child development for 18 years, with success, now having to focus on family well-being and appearing to be more of a social worker mentality.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “For families that are doing really well, some of the things listed under the Family Well Being don't always apply.”</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> “The focus on family wellbeing—it is an important component in the life of a young child. However, no one program can be all things to all people. We cannot be experts in all areas and do a great job in all areas.”</p>
High needs family focus excludes families with special needs	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Limiting the program to high-need families only makes it difficult to carry out the desired outcomes. We need to be able to visit non-high-needs families to determine what if any needs they might have. Also, the information we provide is essential to all families.</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “I think the emphasis on "special needs" is doing a disservice to the "typical" family who also needs support. Once again, I think it is important to provide education and support to all families who want to participate.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “Targeting high needs families while leaving the more typical family, who will at some point be in crisis, without services.</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator Combined):</i> “Funding is not always available for all the needs. For instance, we cannot serve many of our older children. We focus on prenatal through age 3.”</p>
Assessments/Paperwork requirements	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “The focus on paperwork and data collection, including setting deadlines for assessments and requiring certain visit frequencies.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “The family-centered assessment requires that family provided private and detailed information that may not be beneficial to providing services in a school based PAT program.”</p>

Assessments/Paperwork requirements

---

*(Program Coordinator):* "The required set number parent educator reflective hours and the required family-centered assessment is completed within 90 days and annually. These program pieces do assist in reaching the family outcomes which takes but each pieces takes an extraordinary amount of time away from the other features that support the desired outcomes."

---

Curriculum

*(Parent Educator):* "Many aspects of the foundational curriculum are great. However so much is packed into each model plan, I wonder how many home visits the curriculum developers have actually made. The idea that you should not go back and review certain plans does not support our knowledge of brain development - repetition strengthens brain connections. The demand for numbers of required visits for affiliates does not really take into account budget limitation.

*(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator Combined):* "The PATNC curriculum designed for family visits vs. the DESE goals and desired outcomes of child development leading to school readiness are out of alignment. Families are seeking both."

---

Parent educator compensation, turnover, shortages

*(Parent Educator):* "As an educator, I am grateful for the training, the support given from other Parent Educators. I would like the training to be available in stages as webinars or online interactions."

*(Parent Educator):* "All parent educators within the state of Missouri should be expected to have a 4 year degree and be paid on a teacher's salary schedule. The goals of PAT and the role of the educator being a facilitator, partner and helping a family reflect CANNOT be fully met until ALL parent educators are held to an appropriate standard."

*(Program Coordinator):* "When DESE and PATNC do not align in their expectations and requirements, and when DESE says that they HIGHLY RECOMMEND that PAT programs move forward toward Affiliation with PATNC, but does not provide the monetary supports to help us do so (i.e. reimbursing program fees...reimbursing parent educator renewal fees; paying for group connections), we do not have the resources (people or funding) to see every family the required number of visits. We are doing the best we can and there is A LOT of pressure for us to do more with less."

---

The final question in the online survey asked respondents "What ways could DESE better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts?" 321 survey participants responded to the question, of which 296 provided suggestions for ways DESE could better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts. The remaining 25 respondents provided statements supportive of DESE's status quo. Examples of these statements, which are excluded from those reflecting recommendations for change, are as follows:

- “Continue providing free professional development opportunities for PAT educators.”
- “Continue supported funding.”
- “Continue to align with the PAT national center quality endorsement guidelines and to provide funding to support the requirements.”
- “Continue to listen to districts’ needs to help all families.”
- “I think DESE is doing a great job, would like to see more money in the program but that is not up to DESE. Continue to offer professional learning communities to parent educators at no cost.”

The most frequently occurring theme among suggested ways DESE could better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts pertained to funding in general, without a qualifying statement (n = 51, 17%), shown in Table 8. The second most frequently occurring theme, listed in the table as “all families,” is a reference to the high-needs criterion upon which program eligibility is based. Many respondents believe that all families, regardless of where they fall on this criterion, should have access to the resources the PAT program provides. One or more programmatic aspect (e.g., allowing home visits, changing focus, or funding services) was tied to references of “all families” in the survey (n = 46, 16%). Training/professional development was the third most frequently identified theme (n = 38, 13%) followed by home visits (n = 36, 12%).

Both group connections and parent educator supports were mentioned (both at n = 26, 9%), followed by district opportunities/needs (n = 24, 8%), parent educator retention/recruitment support (n = 23, 8%), support for high-needs and non-high-needs families (n = 20, 7%), and addressing parent educator shortages by increasing funding (n = 18, 6%). Supports identified by from 1% to 5% of respondents included the following: school readiness, program requirements, rural programs, PAT and DESE alignment, PAT and preschool alignment, assessments/paperwork, early childhood, professional learning communities, and parenting attitude. Table 9 provides exemplary quotes that are detailed responses to this question.

**Table 8: Responses to Question 4 – What ways could DESE better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Funding (general)	51	17%
Serve all families	46	16%
Training/Professional Development	38	13%
Home visits	36	12%
Group connections	26	9%
Parent Educator Supports	26	9%
District opportunities and needs	24	8%
Parent Educator Retention/Recruitment Support	23	8%
High-needs and non-high-needs families	20	7%
Parent Educators to Address Shortage	18	6%
Program Implementation	16	5%
Screening	16	5%

\*N = 296

**Table 9: Exemplary quotes from Question 4 – What ways could DESE better support consistently high-quality programs in all districts?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Funding	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “I think there has to be more funding, because with funding cuts, programs are cut, which leads to fewer opportunities to educate parents and help child grow.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “It would be great to receive more funding so we can serve more families in our area.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “The state continues to demand more of our students, schools and teachers, yet they do not fund adequately.”</p>
All families	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “DESE needs to fund and support this program for all families as all families will benefit from participation.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “I am hoping with the increase of funding we can begin to support the districts who are trying to support all families.”</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> “Increase funding to service of all families, allow districts to support their families by using DESE funding as needed- not the restrictions to serve only high-needs families.”</p>
Training/professional development	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “Training and support services for staff to deal with the emotional toll of working with high--needs families day in and day out---most of us were trained to be teachers not social workers.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “Perhaps offering training through webinars and not requiring educators to stay overnight and travel, thus incurring additional expenses would be helpful.”</p> <p><i>(Administrator):</i> “More accessible regional training on topics relevant to educators from 1st to 30th year! The population service goals were always an incentive for recruitment and retention.”</p>
Home visits	<p><i>(Parent Educator):</i> “If the evidence-based home visiting model is what DESE desires and would like high-needs families visited 2 times a month and non-high needs visited 1 time a month, then more funding is necessary.”</p> <p><i>(Program Coordinator):</i> “Fund all visits at the same visit rate and leave the number of visits up to the district, as one district’s High Needs are different form the neighboring district.”</p> <p><i>(Parent Educator/Program Coordinator/Administrator Combined):</i> “DESE could better support districts by increasing the reimbursement amount per visit especially those visits involving multiple children in the home.”</p>

Group connections

---

*(Parent Educator):* "Provide additional funding for group connection meetings which are required but not reimbursed."

*(Parent Educator):* "Group Connections (playgroups) help build a strong community and social support for families, and also provide an opportunity for peer modeling and mentoring."

*(Program Coordinator):* "Reinstate funding for group connections as the school/family relationships are critical."

---

Parent educator supports

*(Parent Educator):* "Parent educators required to have a degree, associates, bachelors, masters, etc."

*(Program Coordinator):* "Educate all administrators on the support a Parent Educator needs, how a Parent educator is different from a teacher and how their time is spent differently and their hours need flexibility they will not be working the same hours as a teacher."

*(Administrator):* "All families deserve to have access to a certified parent educator to support them in their role to become their child's first and most important teacher."

---

District opportunities and needs

*(Parent Educator):* "My district had very high turn outs for group meetings, which contributed to recruitment opportunities and exposure of the program."

*(Parent Educator):* "By recognizing each district's demographics & aligning funding to meet the needs of the district, not a general formula, we could visit all families interested in our program."

*(Program Coordinator):* "Make funding consistent for all districts serving all families within their district's needs."

---

Parent educator retention/recruitment

*(Parent Educator):* "Keep funding stable so we can rehire staff to reach more clients."

*(Administrator):* "To encourage the hiring of competent and qualified parent educators."

*(Administrator):* "Funding for districts that simply do not have the financial resources to hire a full-time Parent Educator would be ideal."

---

High needs and non-high needs families

*(Parent Educator):* "DESE could begin to support not only families with high needs, but also non-high-needs families who show an interest in and who also benefit from the PAT program."

*(Parent Educator):* "I believe that funding is restricted in a way that makes it hard to reach out to and get the participation of high-needs families in addition to not being able to meet the needs of the rest of the community who may be more willing and able to participate in the PAT program."

*(Parent Educator):* "Limiting visits to high-need families means that we miss children with more subtle issues or those who have not yet been identified."

---

---

Parent educator shortage	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Allow supervisors to hire and monitor more parent educators."
	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Another parent educator would be able to raise the number of families seen on a regular basis."
	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Make sure there are qualified parent educators and make sure there are enough educators for the amount of families that we serve instead of people working more hours that being paid for consistently."

---

Program implementation	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Funding for supportive programs that help PAT families, i.e., CRIBS, Car Seat Safety and free or reduced-cost car seats to families in need, etc."
	<i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Expect programs to move toward model fidelity by reporting to DESE their progress in all areas."
	<i>(Administrator):</i> "Make sure that money used is truly making a difference in families' lives in the all programs that are offered."

---

Screening	<i>(Parent Educator):</i> "Increase dollars for screening and take away the 50/50 Criteria for payment."
	<i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "Increasing reimbursement rates for each screening to be closer to that for a visit as they take the same amount (or more) time."
	<i>(Program Coordinator):</i> "All screenings for children birth to school age entry should be funded and broaden the high-needs characteristics to include families in crisis, first-time parents, adopted children, ongoing behavior concerns, multiples and multiple children under age of three."

---

## Part 2: Focus Group Interview Results

A total of 173 hand-written responses were collected from six locations during the focus group interview data collection portion. The six Missouri locations were Jefferson City (n = 24), Brookfield (n = 16), Springfield (n = 36), Liberty (n = 33), Cape Girardeau (n = 32), and St. Peters (n = 32).

The focus group responses covered the following four topic areas:

- 1 – Desired outcomes from PAT program participation.
- 2 – Support for PAT programs and affiliates.
- 3 – Whether or not PAT should focus primarily on high-needs clients.
- 4 – Leveraging resource to maximize the positive impact of PAT program efforts.

Table 10 summarizes respondent totals by location and topic area. The distribution of responses by topic area was fairly consistent, with 43 or 44 respondents for each topic area. However, there was more variation in the number of respondents by location, where there were about twice as many respondents from Brookfield (n = 32), Springfield (n = 32), Liberty (n = 33), and Cape Girardeau (n = 36) as there were from Jefferson City (n = 16), and the number of respondents from St. Peters was about right in the middle of those two extremes at 24.

**Table 10: Summary of total respondents by meeting location and topic area.**

Location	Topic Area				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Jefferson City	4	4	4	4	16
Brookfield	8	8	8	8	32
Springfield	8	8	8	8	32
Liberty	8	8	9	8	33
Cape Girardeau	9	9	9	9	36
St. Peters	6	6	6	6	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>173</b>

The following eight tables (Table 11 to Table 18) summarize responses from the four focus group topic areas. Each topic area is described using a two-table set, where the first table in each two-table set summarizes the frequency with which major themes were mentioned, and the second table in each two-table set gives examples of quotes that represent each theme.

Participants in the first topic group were asked, “What is the desired outcome from participation in PAT?” Furthermore, it was suggested that they address such things as the “alignment of programs and services with desired outcomes” and the “most critical function(s) of PAT.” There were 43 total participants in this topic area. Of the 43 total participants, 88% indicated “empowering parents” was the most desired outcome from participation in PAT programs (Table 11). The desired outcomes from PAT participation mentioned by a large percentage of participants were “early identification/intervention” of children in need (79%), and the idea of school “readiness” (63%). Topics mentioned by less than half of participants included “educated/informed parents” (47%), “redefine standards” (35%), “more inclusive” (28%), “serve as a bridge” (19%), “prevent abuse” (14%), and “promote physical/mental health” (12%).

Table 12 expands on these topics and presents exemplary quotes to help explain the context of these comments.

**Table 11: Responses from Topic 1 – What is the desired outcome from participation in PAT?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Empowered parents	38	88%
Early identification/intervention	34	79%
Readiness	27	63%
Educated/informed parents	20	47%
Redefine standards	15	35%
More inclusive	12	28%
Serve as a bridge	8	19%
Prevent abuse	6	14%
Promote physical/mental health	5	12%

\* Total N = 43

**Table 12: Exemplary quotes from Topic 1 – What is the desired outcome from participation in PAT?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Empowered parents	<p>“Empower parents to be able to support their child's learning.”</p> <p>“Help empower parents so they can be the best parents they can be.”</p>
Early identification/intervention	<p>“Catching delayed developmental issues and connecting to resources to address those concerns.”</p> <p>“Identify children with delays long before school entry.”</p>
Readiness	<p>“I believe the #1 goal of PAT is to make sure children are prepared for school.”</p> <p>“Most critical – making or helping family [to be] comfortable with school.”</p>
Educated/informed parents	<p>“PAT gives families information on the different resources that may be helpful.”</p> <p>“Increase parental knowledge of child development.”</p>
Redefine standards	<p>“Clearly defined standards for quality that guide/direct policy.”</p> <p>“We need to align our curriculum to MO learning standards very specifically.”</p>
More inclusive	<p>“I think we need to be more inclusive and provide services to all families.”</p> <p>“We should have personal contacts with all families because all families deserve benefits.”</p>
Serve as a bridge	<p>“Serve as a liaison between school and home.”</p> <p>“Connect families with resources and serve as a bridge between families and the school.”</p>
Prevent abuse	<p>“Decrease child abuse and neglect.”</p> <p>“We need to make sure children are safe from abuse.”</p>
Promote physical/mental health	<p>“In addition to everything else we have to make sure all medical, physical and mental health needs are met in order for parents to actively participate.”</p> <p>“One of the most important things is to make sure we have healthy families, physically and mentally.”</p>

Participants in the second topic group were asked, “How do we best support and maintain consistently high-quality affiliate programs, professional development, technical support, and recruitment and retention of parent educators?” There were 43 total participants in this topic area. Of the 43 total participants, 44% indicated “more funding” and “consistency” were the best ways the PAT program could accomplish these goals (Table 13). “Better pay” and “improve relationships” were both mentioned by 42% of participants indicated they were

only slightly less popular ideas. About one in four participants (26%) suggested improving Visit Tracker, and about one in five participants (19%-23%) made suggestions such as “administrative support,” “mentoring,” “online availability of professional development,” “regular staff meetings,” “change requirements,” and “change reimbursement requirements/procedure.” Lastly, the suggestion “incentives for affiliates” was mentioned by 12% (n = 5) of participants.

Table 14 expands on these themes and presents exemplary quotes to help explain the context of these comments.

**Table 13: Responses from Topic 2 – How do we best support and maintain consistently high quality affiliate programs, professional development, technical support, and recruitment and retention of parent educators? N = 43**

Major Theme	n*	%
More funding	19	44%
Consistency	19	44%
Better pay/benefits	18	42%
Improve relationships	18	42%
Improve Visit Tracker	11	26%
Administrative support	10	23%
Mentoring	9	21%
Online availability of professional development	8	19%
Regular staff meetings	8	19%
Change requirements	8	19%
Change reimbursement requirements/procedure	8	19%
Incentives for affiliates	5	12%

\* Total N = 43

**Table 14: Exemplary quotes from Topic 2 – How do we best support and maintain consistently high quality affiliate programs, professional development, technical support, and recruitment and retention of parent educators?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
More funding	<p>“We simply need more funding for everything.”</p> <p>“Programs need sufficient funds to provide high quality PAT services.”</p>
Consistency	<p>“Affiliate requirements don’t align with district requirements. We need consistency.”</p> <p>“DESE and PAT needs to be one body with one philosophy working together.”</p>
Better pay/benefits	<p>“We really need to work on addressing the inequity with pay and benefits.”</p> <p>“We need to pay parent educators like the professionals they are, with a salary.”</p>
Improve relationships	<p>“We need to build strong relationships with other early childhood agencies.”</p> <p>“I would like to see more opportunities for PAT teachers to interact with each other.”</p>
Improve Visit Tracker	<p>“We need to make Visit Tracker available to every district.”</p> <p>“Visit Tracker is beneficial and has lots of data, so I would like to see it improved.”</p>
Administrative support	<p>“Getting the support of administrators is crucial to the success of PAT.”</p> <p>“There is a major deficit amongst educators with school administrators.”</p>
Mentoring	<p>“Mentors for the parent educators would be very beneficial, and might help with retention.”</p> <p>“We need mentors, especially for new PAT coordinators.”</p>
Online availability of professional development	<p>“National office does not provide quality professional development. We need to have webinars or webcasts.”</p> <p>“We need more web-based seminars.”</p>
Regular staff meetings	<p>“We need to hold regular staff meetings.”</p> <p>“Regional meetings every quarter are REALLY NEEDED.”</p>
Change requirements	<p>The job of parent educators has become more stressful meeting the demands of new requirements. This needs to change.”</p> <p>“Change requirements to require parent educators to have a college degree in a related area.”</p>
Change reimbursement requirements/procedure	<p>“We ask too much of parent educators and the financial ability of districts to compensate parent educators for time spent.”</p> <p>“Parent educators are not compensated for all they accomplish.”</p>

Incentives for affiliates	<p>“There should be an incentive to become an affiliate program – maybe an initial grant that helps pay for affiliation fee/Visit Tracker.”</p> <p>“If you want us to be at affiliate status, what about funding?”</p>
---------------------------	--

Participants in the third topic group were asked, “Should PAT continue to serve all families or focus on families with the highest need?” Additionally, it was suggested they address things such as “prioritization of limited resources,” and “advantages and disadvantages of serving all families versus exclusively high-need families” in their comments. There were 44 total participants in this topic area. Of the 44 total participants, 98% indicated they preferred PAT served all families and not just those with the highest need. Advantages mentioned most often included “loss of stigma” (mentioned by 26% of participants), “early identification/intervention (19%),” “school relationships” (16%),” and “increase participation” (12%). The only notable disadvantage to serving all families mentioned by participants was “not enough funding,” which was mentioned by 19% of participants. Additional comments made by participants included “first-time parents” (19%), “change requirements” (14%), and “district autonomy” (12%). These remaining comments were associated with the “prioritization of limited resources” talking point, which was a topic addressed by much fewer participants.

Table 16 expands on these themes and presents exemplary quotes to help explain the context of these comments.

**Table 15: Responses from Topic 3 – Should PAT continue to serve all families or focus on families with the highest need?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Serve all families	43	98%
Advantages		
Loss of stigma	11	26%
Early identification/intervention	8	19%
School relationships	7	16%
Increase participation	5	12%
Disadvantage		
Not enough funding	8	19%
First-time parents	8	19%
Change requirements	6	14%
District autonomy	5	12%

\* Total N = 44

**Table 16: Exemplary quotes from Topic 3 – Should PAT continue to serve all families or focus on families with the highest need?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Serve all families	<p>“All parents deserve the information PAT provides. It is tax-based and everyone pays.”</p> <p>“High needs families are overwhelmed with services already. I think we should serve all families.”</p>
Advantages	
Loss of stigma	<p>“Serving all families would get rid of the stigma associated with being a high-needs family.”</p> <p>“With universal access, we won't have the stigma of high-needs.”</p>
Early identification/intervention	<p>“Universal access increases earlier identification of delays.”</p> <p>“Delays happen with children. Our goal is to catch those delays early and to provide early intervention.”</p>
School relationships	<p>“If we exclude families, we've destroyed the support building of home-school relationships.”</p> <p>“By not serving all families, we create a segmented program and reduce the ability of families to form networks and relationships with other families and the schools.”</p>
Increase participation	<p>“Families may not report they are high needs and therefore be missed. Serving all families actually helps us increase participation of high-needs families.”</p> <p>“Serving all families will result in broader support and participation in the PAT program.”</p>
Disadvantage	
Not enough funding	<p>“There is not enough time/resources/educators at the current funding level to serve all families.”</p>
First-time parents	<p>“First time parents should be considered high needs.”</p> <p>“First-time parents should become their own category.”</p>
Change reimbursements	<p>“Reimbursements shouldn't be tied to serving high-needs families.”</p> <p>“Screenings should be paid equally across the board.”</p>
District autonomy	<p>“Districts should determine how families need to be served.”</p> <p>“Prioritization should be determined by the districts.”</p>

Participants in the fourth and final topic group were asked, “How can Missouri leverage resources to maximize the positive impact of PAT?” Participants in this group were also asked to address the topics of “advantages and disadvantages of current funding structure,”

“alternate funding approaches,” use of potential increased appropriation (\$3.43 million for FY16)” in their comments. There were 43 total participants in this topic area. Of the 43 total participants, 44% commented the reimbursement procedure should be altered, 42% commented that group connections should be funded, and 37% indicated that “district autonomy” could help to solve some budget issues. One in three people (33%) indicated more funding is needed. And about one in four people (26%) indicated that funds should be used for screenings and/or better pay and benefits. Lesser-mentioned themes included various grants as a funding source (23%), professional development as an important item to fund (23%), that more funding should be spent on increased services (19%), “changing requirements” as a way to maximize positive impact (14%), and hiring staff as an important item to fund (14%).

Table 18 expands on these themes and presents exemplary quotes to help explain the context of these comments.

**Table 17: Responses from Topic 4 – How can Missouri leverage resources to maximize the positive impact of PAT?**

Major Theme	n*	%
Reimbursement	19	44%
Group connections	18	42%
District autonomy	16	37%
More funding	14	33%
Screenings	11	26%
Better pay/benefits	11	26%
Grants	10	23%
Professional development	10	23%
More services	8	19%
Change requirements	6	14%
Hire staff	6	14%

\* Total N = 43

**Table 18: Exemplary quotes from Topic 4 – How can Missouri leverage resources to maximize the positive impact of PAT?**

Major Theme	Exemplary Quotes
Reimbursement	<p>“There should be a standardized way to pay parent educators, per visit, hourly, or salaried.”</p> <p>“Reimbursement does not cover the cost of the services we provide.”</p>
Group connections	<p>“It’s important we have fully-funded group connections because of the intensity and beneficial aspects of this type of support.”</p> <p>“We need funds for group connections. We are required to do monthly connections, but there are no funds.”</p>
District autonomy	<p>“Let districts have control of funding to use as needed. They know better who needs more visits and will benefit most from services.”</p> <p>“Local control over funds is one of the most important things we need.”</p>
More funding	<p>“At current funding we can’t retain parent educators and cannot fund requirements of program services.”</p> <p>“The funding isn’t enough to retain parent educators as professionals.”</p>
Screenings	<p>“Screenings are a higher priority than parent education.”</p> <p>“What would be best is unlimited funding for developmental screening from 3 months to Kindergarten entry.”</p>
Better pay/benefits	<p>“We need the ability to provide higher salaries for parent educators so that they get paid for all they are expected to accomplish.”</p> <p>“PAT needs to be seen as an actual career, not just a foot in the door.”</p>
Grants	<p>“We need grants, but we don’t have the man-power to seek them. Allocate funds to look for grants.”</p> <p>“Missouri needs to get a BIG grant and make PAT a big part of it.”</p>
Professional development	<p>“What we could really use is small training classes in each county.”</p> <p>“Use FY 16 funding to support increased funding for professional development.”</p>
More services/visits	<p>“Any potential funding increases should go towards providing more services.”</p> <p>“We should use increased funding to do more home visits to all families, not just high needs.”</p>
Change requirements	<p>Changing the visit requirements from individual child visits to family visits to allowing family visits is the best way to use what we’ve got.”</p> <p>“We should get to count group connections as a visit contact.”</p>
Hire staff	<p>“It is too difficult to meet essential requirements. Especially in small districts where staff is only part-time. We need more staff.”</p> <p>“In order to maximize the impact of PAT, we need more staff, so that’s where funding should be used.”</p>

## Part 3: Discussion and Conclusion

The Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) department at The University of Oklahoma analyzed data collected from two Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) supported information-gathering efforts investigating attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. As stated earlier, the main purpose of this report was to provide information regarding updates for DESE's PAT administrative manual.

Major findings from the SurveyMonkey data summarized in Part 1 were:

- One of the strongest themes pertained to universal access to PAT program services. The very specific definition of high-needs used to establish eligibility to the program excludes families who, while they certainly have needs based on other criterion, must obtain what services they can within the smaller end of the 75%/25% allocation formula. The majority of survey respondents in some way compared the needs of high-needs families, (i.e., PAT target families) to the needs of those who came under the 25% portion of the ratio using such language as “the typical family,” “universal access,” or “non-high-needs families.”
- PAT parent educators, program coordinators, and administrators responding to the survey identified the most critical function of PAT as parent education, followed by preparing children for school. These two functions stood out in importance across all three roles. Overall, respondents were positive about the parenting and teaching skills their families learned, identifying knowledge of child development, developmental milestones, and age-appropriate expectations as notable accomplishments. However, several educators expressed concern that the increased and broader demands of family wellness removed much needed focus from activities and learning time that should be devoted to school readiness.
- One area of concern mentioned frequently by PAT educators and administrators was the loss of funding of group connections—a program requirement. The majority of survey respondents who mentioned this program component valued it as a venue for family networking and peer-support as well as a natural learning environment for all family members together. However, the lack of funding became the burden of PAT program staff, school districts, or others in the community. Many parent educators implied that the funds came from their own pockets, but the value is such that they were not willing to allow their families to go without it.
- Much of the respondent narrative described parent educator shortages, staff turnover, and difficulties recruiting to fill the position. Job descriptions for the parent educator role were described, in great variety, as part-time, full-time, and overtime; as one position shared across three roles (also administrator and coordinator), as one position in a district, or as one of several similar positions. Survey responses suggested the majority of parent educators are certified teachers with college degrees but feel they have little status among their district peers.

Major findings from the roundtable discussion data summarized in Part 2 were:

- An overwhelming majority of discussion participants were in favor of PAT program efforts serving all families and not just those families with the highest need. More advantages to serving all families were suggested than disadvantages. Suggested advantages included such things such as a reduction of a stigma associated with families receiving PAT services, and an increased ability to identify families in high need of services. The only notable disadvantage to serving all families was the difficulty in funding an expanded program.
- A large majority of participants believed the most desirable outcomes from participation in PAT programs were empowered parents (i.e., parents who are confident and able to assist in their child's education), and early identification/intervention of children. These results suggest many participants believe that if PAT programs can identify children in need of intervention and give parents the tools to aid in that intervention, the PAT program has succeeded.
- The two suggestions for how PAT programs can maintain high quality programs were to allocate more funds and have consistency in policy between PAT and other organizations and

departments. While it is likely funding will remain challenging, addressing consistency in policy can offer the ancillary benefit of increasing communication with other organizations.

- The most effective use of potential increased funds was to alter the reimbursement policies. Many participants in several topic areas made mention to reimbursement issues and contrast between single-child and single-family cost reimbursements. This is another area that might be important to address with respect to policy changes.

Results of DESE's data collection suggest that stakeholders across Missouri are committed to the PAT program and would like to offer services to all families rather than to those families identified as high-need. Stakeholders feel that the PAT program is successful in empowering parents and helping them become advocates for their children. Stakeholders also expressed concern over challenges and limits to funding, how funding limitations impact staffing, and how funding increases could allow reimbursement policies to be altered to allow for differences in single-child and single-family cost reimbursements.