

PARENTS' AND PARENT EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE PARENTS AS
TEACHERS HOME VISITING PROGRAM IN A SMALL RURAL, MID-WEST
COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Young rural children are more likely to live in poverty and experience the majority of their early learning in their own homes or homes of relatives or neighbors. The needs of early childhood education programs in rural communities have remained, by and large, unexamined. Currently, home visiting programs are the target of intense debate and scrutiny with regards to their effectiveness to provide support, information, and assistance to families with multiple risk factors. This case study examines initial recruitment, participation, and engagement of families in the Parents as Teachers home visiting program, in a small, rural Midwest community. The findings suggest that parents and parent educators alike consider home visits to be the most important service component. Home visits allow parent educators to build close personal relationships with family members and gain information that allows them to tailor services to best meet the needs of rural families.