

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Kathy Plourde, and I am the mother of four-year-old Calvin, who is a participant in the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Calvin has been attending group sessions since he was five months old. He was even able to participate in a grant-funded opportunity through the PAT program that allowed him to attend a year-long music program at the Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School. It was there that he met—and still maintains—a truly great friend. It was there that he learned to crawl and even walk. That group fostered his love of music and began laying the foundation for his love of reading. The music instructor gave out books every week that were age-appropriate and engaging. To this day, Calvin will sometimes ask to read Pajama Dance, which is one of the books he received during that year.

These groups have truly helped Calvin build his confidence. He used to be unable to enter a playgroup unless he was the first one there or had what I call a “contact kid.” A “contact kid” is another child he knows well who is also in the group. We usually had to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the playgroup for him to feel comfortable staying and playing. These things may seem trivial; however, they have carried over into other aspects of our daily lives—for example, Calvin’s growing courage to try new activities.

We also receive home visits through the PAT program. During our time with the program, it has gone through a few transitions. I am not very clear on the details; I only ever knew because a new person would come to the house. I was always asked if I wanted to continue and was introduced to each new visitor before the transition happened. I always unequivocally said yes because the amount of education and encouragement—not just for Calvin, but for me as well—has been unmatched.

It is because of the work of people like Dorinda, Carolyn, Beth, Emily, and Sarah, who have come into our home to work with Calvin and me, that Calvin is so proactive in wanting to learn. These individuals have taught me how to meet Calvin where he is developmentally and how to help build his foundation for learning. When I expressed interest in homeschooling Calvin, Beth did not discourage me; rather, she encouraged and educated me on additional ways to facilitate his learning.

Calvin has such a passion for learning everything and anything he can. Yes, part of that I believe comes naturally, but another part is because of this program. These people took the time to truly see my child, hear the type of parent I wanted to be, and work with us to reach our potential.

The last point I want to speak about is the unwavering support this group has given us. I sadly lost my mother very unexpectedly last March. It fell on my shoulders to take care of her estate and everything that entailed. While dealing with her estate and the gut-wrenching grief process, I also had to be a mom to a then three-year-old who did and could not understand why I was always crying or why he could not call his grandmother in heaven.

Our in-home visitor at the time was Beth. She did so much for me that I don’t know if I can ever truly thank her enough. She increased her visits to twice a month, did regular check-ins, and helped guide me through the weeds and darkness. Because of her, I was able to connect with a grief support group that truly helped me through my loss. She was also there for my son during a time when I felt I was failing as a mom. She helped me reconnect with myself and, in turn, reconnect with Calvin. Through play, learning, and a safe place to just be, Calvin and I have found our new normal.

Calvin is a bright, imaginative, funny, courteous, and emotionally attuned child who would not be the same if I had not been fortunate enough to find this program. I am a more confident and engaged mother because of what this program has taught me. If all parents were able to engage in a program like this, I truly believe our children—and our future—would be much brighter.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Plourde