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### **Parents as Teachers National Center Establishes Office in West Virginia WV Parent Connections at Edvantia to Provide Support for Local Programs**

CHARLESTON, WV—West Virginia Parent Connections at Edvantia has been designated by the Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center as the state office for its national program. Local PAT programs help prepare young children for success in school by providing parents with child development knowledge and parenting support. Serving as the state office for PAT will help WV Parent Connections fulfill its mission—to help schools implement parent involvement activities that lead to improved student achievement and stronger partnerships between families and educators. WV Parent Connections is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

“During the years between birth and kindergarten, there are important times when specific kinds of learning related to language, sight, and basic motor skills must take place for a child to develop to the fullest,” explains Anita Deck, who directs WV Parent Connections at Edvantia and serves as PAT State Leader. “PAT helps parents recognize those windows of opportunity and make the most of them. When they do, their children are more likely to start school ready to succeed.”

A 2007 study released by the federally sponsored What Works Clearinghouse found that participation in PAT can close the achievement gap between poverty and nonpoverty children entering kindergarten, and these positive effects are sustained through the third grade.

Sixteen PAT programs currently operate in West Virginia. All use a four-part intervention model known as Born to Learn, which uses trained Parent Educators to deliver services to parents and provide professional development to early childhood professionals.

Part of WV Parent Connections’ federal funding is set aside specifically to support PAT programs. Deck says that by operating the state office, WV Parent Connections can play a vital role in the support and growth of PAT programs in the state. For example, WV Parent Connections is using a portion of its funding to train about 20 people in the Born to Learn model. “As a result, more West Virginia families will get the research-based information, support, and encouragement they need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life,” says Deck.

As the state office for PAT, WV Parent Connections at Edvantia will provide leadership and oversight for all PAT programs in the state and work to expand the reach of PAT programs statewide. An important part of outreach will be developing strategic alliances with other early childhood programs, state and national agencies, and organizations.

Assuming the role of State Supervisor for PAT is Beverly Davis, who will coordinate and deliver advanced supervision, training, and technical assistance for the programs. Davis was a Parent Educator with the first West Virginia PAT program, established in 1993. “I look forward to being a part of this adventure,” said Davis. “As the state office, WV Parent Connections is fulfilling a great need for West Virginia and for PAT.”

Edvantia, which operates the WV Parent Connections program, has been engaged in early childhood education since the 1960s. Then known as AEL, Edvantia developed its own training program for parent educators and experimented with educational television. This early work attracted attention from Fred Rogers (*Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*), Bob Keeshan (*Captain Kangaroo*), and the producers of *Sesame Street*.

**About Parents as Teachers (PAT):** The Parents as Teachers National Center works through a network of state leaders and partners to provide parents with child development knowledge and parenting support. The national center provides curriculum and training, research, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement efforts. PAT programs are in operation across the nation, and the PAT program is also being used by the U.S. government with military families. Additional information about the program is available at <http://www.parentsasteachers.org>.

**About West Virginia Parent Connections:** West Virginia Parent Connections at Edvantia is one of the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) funded by 5-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education in 2006. The purpose of the PIRCs is to help schools and school districts implement parent involvement activities that lead to improved student achievement and stronger partnerships between families and educators. WV Parent Connections provides information and resources for parents and educators on the Web at <http://wvpc.edvantia.org>.

**About Edvantia:** Edvantia is a nonprofit education corporation, founded in 1966, that partners with education agencies, foundations, publishers, and service providers to transform education through research and development. Edvantia provides clients with a range of services, including research, evaluation, professional development, and technical assistance.

