

The following information includes dialog from our pre-conference event, honoring the history of NPEN, as well as additional follow-up comments from Harriet Heath, one of our founding members (noted in addendums). This summary has been edited for clarity. To find the exact, verbatim dialogue of the meeting, please email info@npen.org.

Debbie Farr:
(welcome & introductions)

Harriet Heath:

Greetings, everybody. There was this big dinner and work day in November 1995. 60 people gathered. They came from all over the country and represented a variety of backgrounds. They'd had a wide range of training, and they were of many professions. Their approach to parenting education and what they felt parents needed to know was as varied as their backgrounds. In other words, people active in the field of parenting education are a very diverse group, and they gathered for that work session in 1995.

Mary Kay Stranik:

That night, Nick Carter reviewed his research on parenting education that was going on in the U.S. He concluded from his research, which was supported by the Pew Foundation, that parenting education is, "the adolescence of an emerging discipline, filled with great promise, but plagued by the tension of maturity and immaturity. Our collective challenge is to understand what nurturing is necessary in order to deliver on the promise of this youth." That said, neither Carter nor the Pew Foundation continue to be involved in our parent education growth, I'm sorry to say.

Harriet Heath:

That dinner and work day was a big event in the history of what was to become NPEN, but that dinner and work day were just a manifestation of years of parenting educators gathering and presenting at conferences such as the Family Resource Coalition, NCFR, parenting programs such as MEL. Parents and teachers and hippie were meeting, calling themselves friends in the field. In other words, people were talking together at various places. At the American Orthopsychiatric Association annual meetings, Dana McDermott and I managed to chair a study group focusing on the growth and development of parents and their need for parenting education. At all these gatherings, the conclusion was that there was a need for an organization where parenting educators with such diverse professional fields, could gather and focus on parenting education.

[Addendum: NPEN members facilitated workshops together and gave formal presentations at these national meetings long before 1995.]

Mary Kay Stranik:

Yes, indeed. The, paraprofessional parenting educators is an important group. As you mentioned, the friends in the field. And, I was a little part of that. But back to the beginning, Harriet. We still aren't getting there. How did it all start?

Harriet Heath:

Well, it was Fran Lipman, a professor at Wheelock College, Dave White of the Children's Trust Fund, and Ray Simpson, who is here tonight, who was at the Parent Center at MIT. It was after 2 or 3 years of talking about the need for parent educators to come together, that they put together an ad hoc group who worked with them to organize that dinner and workday that took place in 1995.

[Addendum: Boston was selected because Fran Litman got funding through Wheelock College. She had a parent center there and hoped the new organization would be located in it. Rae Simpson took the initiative of organizing what had to be done to have that dinner/workshop period. The three somehow gathered an ad hoc group who worked together to organize that dinner and work day in 1995. Those who attended were representatives from the fields of medicine, social work, psychology, mental health and education.]

Harriet Heath:

Four questions emerged out of that dinner workshop.

1. Does the field of parenting education really need another organization? There was unanimity that it did and still does.
2. If it does, what can the organization uniquely contribute to the field? That is, what will its services be?
3. Brought up but didn't answer, should that organization be affiliated with an existing organization, or should it be an independent entity?
4. Who will be involved in creating the organization, and who will take responsibility for coordinating and leading the effort?

[Addendum: Over the next four years the ad hoc committee which became the Management Team sought answers to these questions. Their leader, called the Interim Chair, was Rae Simpson. Then Anne Robertson became co-chair and then chair when Rae resigned in 1998. Anne may have continued as Interim chair until 2000. The committee itself changed with people joining and others dropping out. There were strong feelings that it should not be another professional organization. Everyone in the committee already had a professional group and did not want another. To avoid looking like another professional group they decided this group would be a council with a chair not a board with a president so as not to compete with the other professional organizations, this organization would not have a paying membership. The question of whether or not the organization should be independent or part of another national organization was decided by identifying what those other organizations might be and working with them to see what kind of arrangements could be worked out. There were three organizations: The National Council on Family Relations, Family Support America (Family Resource Coalition) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC dropped out for consideration quite quickly. Their work was too different from what this new group would be doing. Representatives of the other two groups met at least twice each trying to write details as to how the groups would function. NCFR came the closest but people from the medical and educational fields felt

NCFR was too academically oriented. The decision was made the new organization should stand on its own.]

Mary Kay Stranik:

The management team, after discussing issues with Family Support America and the National Council of Family Relations, concluded the need for a new organization that would be independent. It would provide, among other advantages, professional identity for diverging professionals, opportunities for networking across regions and professions, and a national forum for addressing issues that would transcend the disciplinary and regional boundaries. The effort would continue with this management team and a coordinator, or co-coordinators, Ray Simpson and Ann Robinson, until a more permanent structure was created in 1999.

Harriet Heath:

The new organization would focus on two issues: it would link people working in and on behalf of parenting education with each other and with existing resources in the field by gathering and disseminating information about the knowledge base, programs, practitioners, and other resources. Secondly, it would catalyze the development of initiatives to address the field's unmet needs by fostering collaborations among existing organizations and individuals. Thus, the new organization would work with existing organizations, not compete with them, and it would provide services existing organizations were not able to make available. It's also important to note that during this period of discussing whether or not to form a new group, there were functioning task groups. There was a group identifying the most needed services. Another group was working with regional and state parenting education groups. There was a group developing a knowledge base. Another group was exploring evidence-based programs, raising questions about the validity of the criteria, and eventually leading to addressing issues of competency and standards for parent educators.

[Addendum: Efforts were made to raise money for the organization. Anne Ellwood wrote several proposals none of which were accepted. Volunteers continued to move the organization forward.]

Mary Kay Stranik:

And although this has always been a theme for NPEN, that is the competencies and the standards, which were completed in the last few years, and will be explained later tonight.

Harriet Heath:

It was a long time in coming to fruition, in other words. Each of these task groups had a description of what their work was to be, questions to be answered, and an identified facilitator or person responsible for the work. In other words, the work of NPEN was underway while the organization was being constructed. The organization work culminated when the bylaws became effective in January 1999.

[Addendum: Eve Sullivan, sometimes with Rae Simpson, was attending meetings of the International Federation for Parent Education. Through that organization NPEN members met Luc Dupont in Canada and Mary Crowley, the director of an extensive government run parenting education program in England. We exchanged visits and materials with Mary. Rae notes that some of our competence list draws from work coming out of England. Contact with Mary ended when the English government defunded it. Julia Gippenreiter a professor at the Moscow State University, introduced herself to Rae Simpson at MIT. Several of our group visited Julia in Moscow where we met with a variety of parenting educators and facilitated some training sessions.

Mary Kay Stranik:

In May of 1999, the permanent structure was instituted. The ad hoc committee, which had become the management team, was now the council. An advisory board was to be of outstanding scholars, noted people in the field, those who would guide the organization as to what was needed. What it became was an organization of previous officials of the organization.

Harriet Heath:

They worked on organizational details such as term limits, adding members, rotating officers, procedures for conducting business, and the role of past chairs. It had to decide which of the working task groups should be continued and which to lay down. As these details were worked out, the organization became functional.

Mary Kay Stranik:

When I came on board, and became chair, there was already in place by the other volunteers a packet of information for new members, a website in 2001, and a logo. Writing Core Principles happened in 2002. We also provided webinars and presented at conferences of other organizations. But the attainment of the 501c3 was more difficult due to serving parenting educators, not parents directly. So after what seemed like a thousand phone calls by me, each one more agitated than the last, I might add, our agent finally went on vacation, and the substitute gave the permission that we needed. So this was in the year 2006, not 2008 that we have in our timeline. I found it under my desk, the actual document. I want to make note about what was not accomplished in this period. First, they did not manage to raise funds, a continuing issue, I think, for NPEN. Second, ERIC, which was to hold our depository of relative information, closed and NPEN was not able to collect that body of information that we planned to put on it. However, the work of this period was compiled in 2006 by Dana McDermott, the editor, with the assistance of Harriet Heath and Glenn Palm in an issue of Child Welfare Journal of the Child Welfare League of America, September to October of 2006, issue. Chapters, mostly written by NPEN members, covered a summary of the body of knowledge available at the time such as parents as adult learners, competencies needed by a parent educator, a report, a report of Parenting Collaborative, and the need to build parenting education as a profession. The journal ended with a chapter on future challenges in parenting.

Anne Robertson:

That was sort of a nice bridge, Mary Kay, appreciate it. And... and so in those, I was, at that time, working at ERIC, which was based at the University of Illinois. And, in some of those earlier discussions and meetings that Harriet and Mary Kay mentioned, it was clear, you know, Ray Simpson and Eve Sullivan had been doing a lot to sort of host some of those pieces of what the emerging NPEN would be but it was clear that it needed a new home. And because of the allied work that ERIC did, and certainly the College of Education and Early Childhood, they agreed to host NPEN and support the website as well as be the fiscal agent. Over the years, we realized, and when I came on as Chair later, I did do a co-facilitation with Ray who was kind of the founding Chair here. But it was really clear that NPEN needed to be its own entity, its own organization and so Mary Kay really did the yeoman's share of work with all of that non-profit paperwork, stacks and stacks and stacks of paperwork development. And then what I began to do is explore the possibility of using an accountant, accounting firm, you know, as the physical agent, and we did some interviews with different accounting firms, and eventually, set up on Kemper to do that accounting. But, as was mentioned earlier, there was a website, and then I think a few people have talked, even just before, we were talking about the NPEN listserv. This is a stage when most people did not have email. If they did have, they weren't really sure how to use it. The vast majority of the people in the United States did not have internet access. This has, you know, grown dramatically over the last two decades. We don't even think about it anymore. But at that time, that really was not there, but there was this consensus to pull together discussions virtually via the NPEN listserv. We had a couple of staff that were at Eric, Debbie Foose, who helped to be webmaster and kind of manage and Pinnell listserv. Bernard Cesaroni, some of you may remember, was also in that. And, it was just a fascinating time in parenting education. The listserv itself was... we decided, and there was a lot of discussion about this, that there really wasn't any decision we made about NPEN or a lot of things with NPEN without really discussion and consensus about how to move forward with these key pieces. The listserv participants were parenting educators, people involved in the field of parenting educators. They were not parents. Simultaneously, Eric had a parenting listserv, and so parents were actually getting online and having questions and discussions and so forth, but this was different. This was a parenting education listserv. And it was a virtual resource, it was a way that professionals were beginning to learn how to communicate using that, that resource, and it grew very rapidly. We were not able to find the old NPEN website, and I'm sorry about that. ERIC lost their federal funding, in the Bush administration, and so things changed very rapidly at that point for ERIC. But I went back through all of my email, and I actually did find excerpts from the NPEN listserv. And so that was fun. You know, we talk about how email never goes away, it is true, it was there way, way back. And I just want to share with you that some of, you know, the discussions, it covered things like, just resources. People would, if they had a job, availability, they would post that job there, conferences, and then, all of those topics that a lot of newborn parents are interested in. It covered baby sleep positions and you may remember that there was some controversy with babies sleeping on their back. You know, when I had my babies, they were supposed to sleep on their tummy. But now, as we now know, they're

supposed to sleep on their back and in a little... in a little sleeping bag. So, things like that, toilet training, tantrums, all of those kind of topics were covered, information and resources shared about that when parenting educators reached out. But there were also a lot of topics that were covered, tackled really because of timely things that were happening in parenting education at that time. So, as you may recall, there was a growing body of research on early childhood brain development and infant brain development, as well as adolescent development. And people were very interested in what that research was saying, and how parenting education and evidence-based work with parenting education could, interact with that. That was... that was an interesting topic as it went along. Also, merged families. Much more co-parenting, discussions going on, what merged families were like, and people wanted more additional resources so that they could work with their parenting, education clients. Supporting military families was another topic that was very timely for that era. You may remember that the DoD was trying to really upgrade their childcare facilities across the nation, as well as provide more family support for military families. So there was a lot of discussion related to that. Listserv participants reached out to the listserv when they had a parenting group or a client, with a unique problem. Often the title in that, email that was sent was HELP, with capital H-E-L-P. And, you know, before long, they actually did get help, because people were very quick to respond with a resource, or an experience, or a suggestion that they had worked with a client. There were also discussions about new parenting books or practices based on religious guidelines, as opposed to evidence-based and developmental research. And, there were... there was a lot going on in the country with that right now, and unfortunately, some poor outcomes from children, from parenting programs that had cropped up. Not really based on evidence-based approaches. And those discussions got lively. So we put together a netiquette so when you signed up for the listserv, you got an expectation of etiquette. I don't think we ever dropped anybody off of the listserv but it really helped to frame what we were trying to do to become a professional organization that addressed difficult topics. There were a lot of difficult topics – one was racism in parenting education and differences between race and culture in parenting education. So a lot of difficult topics were discussed in a professional manner with additional resources. Also, when media would come out with different articles, sometimes people collaborated together to provide a collective response to that media post, and those, for example, the Today Show, Parents Magazine, or Time Magazine, there were different topics that people brought those up, and occasionally worked together behind the scenes to provide a response to that. So essentially, at this stage, NPEN was growing. We were trying to use the resources that were available to us, was becoming its own organization, and essentially, it was very instrumental in building a professional community around parenting education but being nimble to change. And I think that thread in some of our discussions came through a lot. We wanted to be very careful that the organization was nimble to change. We had seen some organizations fold that we did not think would happen during some of those phases because of lack of resources or a variety of different things, and we wanted to be sure that that didn't happen. We also really enjoyed meeting in person, and as I recall, we tried to do that at least twice a year. Betty, isn't... didn't we try to do that around once or twice a year?

Betty Cooke:

I was going to mention that, because another rich thing about these middle years, all of that time, we met in person for our annual meetings, and I think that has made such a difference. I was listing some of them, and they're on the list that Rachel put out. Albany, New York, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Los Angeles, Denton, Texas, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis. And the thing about... and we were usually connected to another... to a professional organization, and our people who were at the annual meeting also did workshops at those conferences, so that was another part that was valuable. I, at least personally, in talking to some of you others over the years, these in-person annual meetings provided opportunities for us council members to really get to know each other and develop long-term, lifelong relationships and commitment to NPEN and advancing the field of parenting education, and I just sometimes wish that . . . I understand why it can't be done so much anymore but that was a rich part of what we did. Anne – you left such a great situation for me to take over as president. You heard all that she said. I loved working with Debbie and Bernard. I was very involved in constantly updating the website with them, and dealing with membership, and the listserv, and all that richness of the topics you shared. The listserv was thriving with lively, substantive discussion on all those hot topics. And I always like to share, we had over 400 members at our peak time on there and it was free, so I don't want to say members, 400 subscribers, and it was a great recruiting tool. And so that was a way you were getting this benefit, having all this. I'm sure those of you who did it then, our emails were full of, you know, several every day, and you didn't have to look at them if you didn't have time, but if you did, it was a rich resource to go to. And then decisions were made after that to move from the listserv to a forum, and I don't think we've ever quite had the energy, as Anne made so real in all the richness of what you've shared, that that listserv did, but that was a really important part of that in those middle years. And then the website, as you said, you started that, and that was somebody else you had monitoring, or maybe that's what Debbie and Bernard helped with that, too. And like you said, there was information on conferences and events on the website, and we also had information on degrees and certification programs, and that's still on the website today. And a kind of sidebar, I'd love to see the NPEN board think about doing some updating. There's a section on parenting education networks, organizations, and programs by state. And, these were identified based on some survey research done at that time by Heidi Stotz and undergraduate students at the University of Tennessee. Some of you remember... may remember Heidi. She was very active during this middle period. And, and it helped, identify people, if they needed to connect with groups and other professional organizations and networking by state, and it's there. Jody, I'm looking at you, I remember you helped me up to date Ohio not so long ago, and Mary Kay, you and I updated Minnesota, but we need to have it all updated. Then I just want to take a couple minutes to talk about 2011 was really a profoundly exciting year. There were two big events. First, we engaged in a day of strategic planning at a two-day meeting at our annual meeting in Denton, Texas in February. We had been given a generous financial gift to hire a professional strategic planner who worked for several months before the meeting with small groups of council members, and they each focused on different aspects of strategic planning, and we brought, at that day we were together, we... those were used to help clearly identify where we wanted to go with six committees, and

they're similar to what we have now. I'll just say them quickly, communication and website resources, leadership and advocacy, networking and membership, professional preparation and recognition, nominating and financial resource development. And then the other big event was in, Corvallis, Oregon, and many of you were there then at Oregon State University, a national forum on professional development systems for parenting educators in May. NPEN was one of the sponsors of the forum, and the NPEN Professional Preparation and Recognition Committee at that time, shared by Jerry Wolf of Oregon and Pam Langer really led the way in envisioning this event. And this is where we took major steps to really take on a long-term focus on the parenting educator competencies. They've been discussed, but we left there with concrete plans of how we were going to move forward, and this work is based on Dana McDermott on here now. We need to give you credit, because your foundational work (Dana's from the Loyola University in Illinois) really helped us move forward. And many, many people worked on that for several years until we did our first published document in 2018. And then out of there came a group to work on the paraprofessional competencies, and I think Stephanie's going to be saying more about that. The Professional Preparation Recognition Committee at that time also continued work that was started in the very early years by Karen DeBoard on a framework for understanding parenting education professional preparation and recognition, and we are now working on that. Judy Wolf and Stephanie and Sandy are working on that, and the new updated one is going to be on the website, and it's really helpful to those who are exploring becoming a parent educator, or those who are involved in parenting education preparation and recognition. Evaluation – Harriet and Mary Kay I've got to give you a shout out – it's been an important topic through all 30 years and it's still one we're attending to. There's a really good webinar on it we did more recently but that's another big topic we've tackled to help with professional development.

Debbie Farr:

Just a quick note, the 2025 edition is on the website so people can find it there. And I'll add, because of the listserv, I ended up connecting with several other people and we did an offshoot email of our own. That's how the Family Life Coaching Association started. So it's really interesting to see that trajectory of the listserv and how that worked. And trust me when I say, for the last 3 years we have tried extremely hard to find something that would replace it and we still struggle with that. So, you can, however, find an NPEN group on LinkedIn. We thought that might be the closest thing we could come up with.

Stephanie Jones:

Dr. Karen DeBoard was my graduate mentor. At some point in my studies, she said I want you to join this meeting. It was the Professional Preparation and Recognition Committee and Betty was chairing it.

Betty Cooke:

We had committee meetings on conference call and telephones, and I was thinking about it the other day. We had no Zoom, we had nothing, so we had to be careful we weren't interrupting each other.

Stephanie Jones:

So that's how I became involved in NPEN and before I knew it, I had volunteered to revise the Professional Preparation Recognition Chart. That was about 2009, I believe.

Betty Cooke:

You were also hugely influential in getting those competencies ready for publication, and I have to mention Glenn Paul, because Glenn would come down and meet in my house, and we had you on the telephone, and the three of us were revising those competencies for 2 or 3 hours.

Stephanie Jones:

I should talk a little bit about the paraprofessional competencies work fueled at the Oregon summit. We had a breakout session that was just NPEN board members and I remember the discussion about whether or not paraprofessionals should be a part of this field of parenting education. And I, along with Mary Kay and Sandy and others, felt very passionately that they should. They play a vital role. So, following the summit, we got together. Lorna, I believe, is on the call, and she's been an instrumental part of that work as well. But we did a series of activities related to identifying paraprofessionals, differentiating them from professionals, and then we engaged in focus groups in 5 different states to look at some of the issues and topics and trends, among paraprofessional parenting educators, we wrote a white paper. And from that we moved on and developed competencies for parenting educators that aligned with, but were unique, to paraprofessionals as well as a training manual for how people can work with paraprofessional parenting educators. So it's not a curriculum, it's about how to screen, interview, work with, and support paraprofessional parenting educators. And at this point I'll defer to Mary Kay and Sandy and Lorna, if you want to add anything about that work. And Judy Wolf!

Mary Kay Stranik:

There were about 6 of us, I think, that we waited until the professional parenting educators did their work and listed all the components they thought were important and then took that and adapted it to paraprofessionals. It took some adaptation but I think the document really serves that population well.

Judy Wolf:

It was easy for us, as professionals, to sit and talk about what we thought about paraprofessionals and I think it was really important that we gathered those groups in each of our states and gave them a voice. Sandy, with Lorna (who was working on her PhD at the time under Sandy's direction) anchored that from Texas Women's University. They collected the data and Lorna did a lot of the assessing of trends and stuff but I was really proud that we asked the paraprofessionals what they thought before we proceeded with that document.

Stephanie Jones:

All of those documents, the competencies document, the paraprofessional competencies, the training manual, and the white paper are all on the NPEN website. So please, if you haven't seen them, please take a look at them. I think the competencies was a bit part of the middle years, literally 10 years, I think. We spent years developing and redeveloping and refining and getting feedback on the competencies document. We also had help from Cindy Wolf who did a fabulous job on the layout. Everything we asked for, she included so I think we have some materials that NPEN can be very proud of. Also on the website is an infographic. It's something that, I first started working on with NCFR, and then ultimately we just did an NPEN one. I was trying to do one where we could collaborate and come up with one for the field, but as it turns out, we came up with one for NPEN, and I think it's beautiful. It shows how parenting education is embedded in the community. It tells a little bit about NPEN and provides a nice overview of the competencies – I think it's a resource we can use going forward. So those are some of the resources that were developed in the middle years. I want to say a couple things about the listserv – I can't say enough about how instrumental that resource was for me and for our field because it was really amazing to see how people came together. Jim is one of the folks I interacted with as well as Dr. Howard King. I engaged with Dr. King, for 5 years, and he taught me a lot about psychosocial pediatrics, and I learned, a tremendous amount from him, and grateful for, you know, for the connection that NPEN brought, so that I could learn from him. I was Chair and then Meg followed. So back then someone was vice chair for 2 years, chair for 2 years, and then past chair for 2 years. So it was a 6-year term. So I worked closely with Meg for several years. We collaborated on a letter to Hillary Clinton and did a New York Times article which was a letter to the editor in response to Christoph's opinion piece which touched on parenting and the importance of parenting but failed to mention any kind of programs for parents. So we responded with a letter that got printed, got published. There were more we did but didn't get published, but we tried. Also during my tenure we were approached by a national brand which we were able to partner with on a campaign that was never released. As consultants, we were paid \$30,000 which took us a long way to providing funding for NPEN since the membership fee was \$25. Kemper was involved with the finances and then I had someone locally that was a bookkeeper help us. As mentioned, board meetings were in person, connected with other conferences. Not only did we go but we presented at regional and state conferences. Meg – tell them your story!

Meg Akabas:

Minnesota was my first year as Chair and I was chairing the annual meeting (in Minnesota). There was news of a snowstorm of magnificent size so people either didn't come or people started leaving. They did have the first day of the conference (NCFR), which some of us participated in and gave presentations. But then we had to make a decision about what to do because some of us were still there and we had two more days or so of meetings, for our annual meeting. We knew if we got snowed in, we weren't gonna get out so we moved the meeting to a Marriott (by the airport) and called around to find conference space, which we found. So I announced we were moving the meeting and would start in the afternoon. It was a treacherous, white-knuckle drive!

Stephanie Jones:

I was chairing Meg. You were the vice chair and in charge of logistics.

Meg Akabas:

Right. I was in charge of organizing. So anyway, we did end up meeting although we were missing a fair mount of people who either never came or had to bail. But we did meet and some of us got stuck for a day or two and couldn't get out. Just one or two more things to mention that happened, sort of the mid to later years, when I became chair and then after me. One of the things that was happening nationally was, with social media, the proliferation of books published by celebrities or experts on parenting. You know – saying what they had to say about parenting. There was a lot of stuff coming out that we were kind of competing with in terms of trying to get parenting education to be a thing that was recognized and normalized. We wanted parents to know what it was and that we were pushing against this kind of thing where anybody could kind of hang out a shingle and say they knew about parenting and then write a book about it. And so we tried to do, more in the realm of public information, and we started a campaign called Parenting Education Matters, which Ellen Taner was very, much involved with and pushed, as well as Daniel Aretz [originally part of policy and advocacy, now part of the marketing committee]. We did social media posts, sharing messages around parenting education that tried to work on that aspect of the field, in terms of getting it out to the public, making it known, educating the public about what parenting education is, and why it's important, and normalizing it. So that was one, I think, important thread line. Another thing we did, was change the website to make it more parent-friendly, so that there are places on the website now that parents can go to in order to find out what parenting education is where to find it, how to choose a parenting education program or a parenting educator. And Danielle and Ellen were also really instrumental in that. I also want to give props to Judy Wolf, who stepped in as my co-chair or vice chair for a while when the next person, Anna Clarkson, couldn't because she was having a baby. During my tenure we also redid the committees, changed the bylaws somewhat about what the committees were, and what the advisory committee was doing, and sort of that kind of thing because they hadn't been revised in a long time. Then we updated the website, did a new logo and a new look, and sort of branding of the organization. We also brought on Rachel in 2018 which was a game-changer, having someone so competent. The other thing I wanted to mention was we were part of the Parenting Matters report that was done by the National Academy of Engineering, Mathematics, and Sciences back in 2018. It somehow got on my radar that this report was being done and they were doing a think-tank around families and supporting families and I was like, how could you not have parenting education in this whole effort? I'll put the link in the chat box – it was a report on supporting families of children 0 to 8. And it was quite thorough about research, about supporting parents, and, you know, what kind of things were effective, and how things were changing, and the knowledge, and what knowledge you needed to have to work with parents and all sorts of things without really mentioning parenting education – shocking. So we did a review of it and added in the word 'parenting education' in several places. We made sure some of the work that the competencies group was working on, like, some input about what people needed to know. It was very subtle in terms of we didn't get to name

our competencies document or anything like that, but making sure that the kind of things about attitudes and beliefs and knowledge were in there in certain ways. And then we got listed in the forward as contributing on page 8.

Stephanie Jones:

I also want to mention the self-assessment, the parenting educator competency self-assessment that is in the works and that we did a response to the Surgeon General's report on parent stress so NPEN was able to respond to that as well.

Harriet Heath:

A couple other things need to be added. One was Celia Wilson did two surveys of parent education of our members and what programs they were using and contributed to our knowledge of what was going on within the organization. The other is that YaeBin has pulled together work that was done by the evaluation group on evidence-based programs and has submitted it for publication.

[Addendum]

Mention was made in the discussion of the current functioning task groups including the exploring evidence-based programs. **Not mentioned** were two conclusions of this group based on their extensive survey of the issues. One, the finding the subjects used in the research of evidence programs were often at risk of deviant behavior or exhibiting deviant behavior, raised the question if the validity was relevant for our groups. Second, good parenting education practices include the need to be flexible. Altering an evidence-based program makes it no longer meeting the standards of the program. The discussion led to wondering what programs members of NPEN were using. Celia Wilson conducted and analyzed two surveys of the members of NPEN asking about what programs they were using. (See Yae Bin's paper for a summary of the results.) This led the group to conclude that the effectiveness of a parenting education program could not be based solely on its curriculum delivery. Another standard must be used. The obvious alternative would be certifying the quality and expertise of the facilitator. The NPEN group on competencies has dealt with the issue of the qualities and competencies of the facilitators of parenting education groups.

Debbie Farr:

And, last year was our first National Parenting Education Day. Three years ago was our first conference. Bylaws were renewed again and we're staying focused on current research. We've also created networking opportunities for leadership and the members at large, adapting to our members as well as current events and the evolving status of parenting education. Lastly, we've been focused on creating a sustainable, solid organization. That's been very, very important. We are now over 200 members and are back to being in-the-black because of the conference. Other comments?

Ellen Taner:

Meg, there was something else you and I did. We recognized there was only one television show that ever showed a family, Everybody Loves Raymond. They went to a

parenting class. We wanted there to be more storylines with people going to parenting class so you and I were both in California at the same time and learned there was an organization, Health and Humanity in Hollywood or something like that. Most of their storylines came from requests from the CDC. So at some point, if we're going to be looking at what we might want to do in the future, or if we're passing the baton to new people coming on, if there's anybody in the theater or movie industry that could work with the CDC on creating a presence of our profession in storylines, that would help. Even if it's not people going to class, it could be a professional instead of everybody always going to see a social worker. A family could go to a parenting educator when a baby is born, for example.

Meg Akabas:

The correct name is Hollywood Health.

Jim Rogers:

I've been a member almost from the beginning. I was asked to join NPEN by Mary Kay and became a member of the council for two years. I worked with membership and helped design the first or second logos and stuff like that, so I was very involved. Actually, I had been involved from the very beginning in California, when people first started talking about a parenting education organization. So I've been around a long time. I will be 91 next week. And I'm here speaking for the practitioners in the field, which is where I've spent most of my 34 years. I left the council because I developed macular degeneration, and I told Mary Kay at the time. Thank you. Good God, what great work all of you have done making it possible for us in the field to do the work we've done. And it's been my pride to say I am a member of NPEN. We've tried to spread that word as much as possible in my area. I've written columns, I've written books, I've done all kinds of stuff to try to advance the cause of parenting education. So, it's been... you've... most of you have heard from me at one point or another on email. If you think back during the years, you probably heard something from Jim Rogers maybe about corporal punishment or something. But anyway, thank you very much for all that you have been doing, and the people who are involved now, you're doing a hell of a great job. Let's just get out there and let people know we exist, and we can help. Thank you all very much.

Debbie Farr:

Anybody else have any questions or comments?

Rae Simpson:

Hi, everyone. This has been a lot of fun. I want to mostly say congratulations to everyone, and thank you. It's remarkable. Honestly, I think a few of us who were there in the gestation period didn't think it was necessarily going to last partly due to funding issues as grant after grant was turned down. I'm just very grateful for all the work that has gone into NPEN over the years. I wanted to reflect on a couple things. One is that I am surprised that it didn't start until 1996. In a sense, I think of it as having started earlier, and that has to do, I think, with what I think Harriet mentioned - the fact that we'd been meeting informally for years, and plotting and planning because we were all going

to NCFR, Family Resource Coalition, Ortho, other meetings, so we naturally saw each other. And we were sort of having parenting education meetings and those organizations actually valued our presence and they've continued to value our presence after we became a formal organization because we gave presentations and enriched their thinking, I think, quite a lot. And so I, in a sense, think it's even older than 30 years, at least in my mind – a good 5 or 10 years more maybe. And the other thing I wanted to mention, and I think Eve probably knows the most about this, is it had kind of an international component for a while. In that, Luke DuPont and others in Canada were interested, and there was an international organization. I remember going to a meeting in Paris, where we were basically the American component of this international effort, so it had a little flair for a time that is fun to remember. So thank you all.

Dana McDermott:

And England, Rae, we worked with. And they actually built in the competencies into their work; competent job descriptions and work competencies and they had 204 competencies. But we worked with them very well. They were very supportive.

Betty Cooke:

And Dana, at the 2011 meeting in Oregon, Mary Crawley from England flew in and spoke and that was part of many factors that were impetus for going forward as we did.

Eve Sullivan:

I was at her 80th birthday in London a couple of years ago and she told me that many of the competencies and the work and the institution that they had established within neighborhood councils were undone by the political change, so it is so hard, and every one of us knows this, to keep the work moving forward, and big kudos to everyone on this call. I just sent Jim a large print list of everyone who's on the call, because... Thank you, everyone – we're doing it and we need each other to make it successful, so thank you.

Ellen Taner:

And I want to do another shout-out about Eve, because she used to go to the United Nations and speak with their family policy group. I know for a few years you were doing that, Eve. You know, you've just been such a dynamo in so many different arenas, promoting our field. So, thank you.

Debbie Farr:

NPEN exists in great part because of these people you have heard from tonight and those you are sitting next to. Teddy Roosevelt said, the more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future. And Alex Haley said, in every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past and a bridge to our future. So we hope you've enjoyed hearing about the journey NPEN has taken, and we so appreciate you being part of the family and sharing that journey with us this evening. I would like to make a toast so if you are sitting somewhere close to something that you can drink, I would like to raise a toast to 30 years that we've had and 30 more great years to come. Thank you all for joining tonight and thank you committee.

4-16-26

Pre-Conference – NPEN's 30th Anniv. – Focus on our History