Outcomes of Participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension Parent Education Programs

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) system offers a variety of programs for parents and caregivers. Offered at CCE associations throughout New York, these programs reach a wide range of families and seek to promote positive parenting and, ultimately, healthy family and child development. This research brief presents data collected from participants in CCE parent education programs held between March 2009 and July 2010. Data were collected from participants at the first session (a pre-test) and at the last session (a post-test) and was gathered from those parents and caregivers taking part in programs that comprised at least six hours of content delivery. Results of the analysis of these data are shown below.

Demographics of Participants in CCE Parent Education Programs
A total of ten parent education programs were evaluated, as shown below. The largest number of participants took part in the Discipline is not a Dirty Word program (26% of all participants), followed by the Parenting Skills Workshops Series (19%), and Magic Years program (17%).
The following summaries use data from 452 participants who completed a pre-test survey given at the first session of their parent education class. In total, data was collected from nine counties throughout the state. Jefferson County had the largest number of participants (36% of total participants), followed by Orange County (17%) and Suffolk County (12%).
The majority (65%) of participants in the parent education classes were female.

Educational attainment among the participants varied widely, with the greatest number of participants whose education stopped at 12th grade or a GED (27%), followed by those who had attended, but not graduated from, college (19%).
The vast majority of the participants in parent education classes were white (73%), and 47% of the participants were married or partnered. On average, participants had two children in their household under the age of 18.
Pre-Post Survey Results

This study used a pre- and post-test evaluation, in which the participants were asked to answer two identical surveys—one given at the first session of the class and another given after the completion of the last parenting class. The survey included ten questions about parenting attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge designed to capture some of what was taught in the class. The pre/post study design allows researchers to see if attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge change during the course of the workshop. Using this type of research design does not allow one to determine whether taking part in the parent education class caused a change in knowledge, attitude or behaviors; such changes could occur for other reasons outside of the workshop. However, it is possible that any significant pre-to-post changes in parenting attitudes, behaviors and knowledge that are observed may have resulted from taking part in the program.

The following evaluation is based on information provided by 340 participants who completed a CCE parent education program and completed both a pre- and a post-test survey. Eight out of the ten items on the survey showed significant improvements from the pre- to the post-test. Specifically, participants taking part in CCE parent education classes reported increased confidence.
in making rules that take their child’s needs into consideration, decreases in how often they yell at their child, decreases in the number of hours their children spend watching television, increased patience with their children, increased time spent reading with their child, increased use of explanations for rules they make, increased feelings of support, and increased confidence in having the skills necessary to be a good caregiver.

A p-value generated from a paired t-test was used as a statistical measure to determine whether a change in a given survey question between the pre- and post-test was significant. A p-value of .10 or less was considered statistically significant, and means that we can be 90% sure that the pre-to-post changes in participant responses are not due to chance.

In comparing participants’ pre- and post-test survey results, the following questions showed statistically significant changes.

![Bar chart showing changes in reading frequency from pre to post-test.]

**How often do you read to your child or does your child read for enjoyment?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I do not have as much patience with my child(ren) as I should.

Pre: 2.98  Post: 2.63

I try to make rules that take my child's individual needs into consideration.

Pre: 1.61  Post: 1.34

How often do you yell at your child?

Pre: 2.15  Post: 1.91
I try to explain the reasons for the rules I make.

Sometimes a person needs the support of people around them. When you need someone to listen to your problems when you’re feeling low, are there...
These results indicate that eight out of ten measures of parenting attitudes, behaviors and knowledge improved significantly from the pre- to the post-test. This suggests that, across the state, CCE parent education programs have a positive impact on their participants.
Visit the Parenting in Context project at:
http://www.parenting.cit.cornell.edu

This work was supported by a joint research and extension program funded by Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station (Hatch funds) and Cornell Cooperative Extension (Smith Lever funds) received from Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Maria Korjenevitch is a Senior in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.

Rachel Dunifon is an Associate Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.

Kimberly Kopko is an Extension Associate in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.