Outcomes of Participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension Parent Education Programs in Tompkins County 2012-2013

By Eliza Cook, Rachel Dunifon, and Kimberly Kopko

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Tompkins County offers a variety of programs for parents and caregivers. 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 Tompkins County CCE parent education programs from July 2012 to July 2013. Participants included parents and caregivers taking part in programs that comprised at least six hours of content delivery.

Data were collected from participants at the first session (a pre-test) and at the last session (a post-test). Results of the analysis of these data are shown below.

Demographics of Participants in Programs in Tompkins County, New York

A total of three programs were evaluated in Tompkins County, as shown below. The largest number of participants took part in the Parenting Skills Workshop Series (63% of all participants).

![Type of Program Chart]

- Parenting Skills Workshop Series (PSWS) - 63%
- Thriving With Your Spirited Child - 25%
- Other Programs - 12%
The following summaries use data from 145 participants who completed a pre-test survey given at the first session of their parent education class. The majority of participants in the Tompkins County CCE parenting classes were females (62%).

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to Answer</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Educational attainment among the participants varied widely, with the greatest number of participants having finished their education at 12th grade or a GED (26%), followed by those who had completed more than a four-year college degree (20%).

Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade or GED</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-4 year college grad</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year College Grad</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year college grad</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to answer</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond high school</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-11th Grade</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade or less</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the participants in Tompkins County CCE parent education classes were white (79%) and the most common marital status was married or partnered (46%).

**Race**

- White: 79%
- Asian: 3%
- American Indian: 3%
- African American or Black: 3%
- Other: 3%
- Hispanic/Latino: 9%

**Marital Status**

- Married/Partnered: 46%
- Single: 29%
- Refused to answer: 10%
- Separated/Widowed: 8%
- Divorced: 7%

**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 73 participants, who completed their program and completed both a pre- and a post-test survey. Six of the ten measures tested showed significant improvements from the pre- to the post-test. Specifically, participants of parent education classes in CCE of Tompkins County reported increased patience with their child, an increased confidence in making rules which take their child’s needs into consideration, increased belief that they have the skills necessary to be a good caregiver, increased time spent reading with their child, decreases in the number of hours their children spend watching television, and increased belief that they have enough people to count on when needed.

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

Definitely False
Definitely True

I honestly believe I have the skills necessary to be a good caregiver.

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

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

- Everyday: Pre: 4.03, Post: 4.26
- Never: Pre: 2.30 hours, Post: 1.64 hours

Think for a moment about a typical weekday for your family. How much time - either in your home or elsewhere - would you say your child spends watching television on a typical weekday?

- Pre: 2.30 hours, Post: 1.64 hours
These results indicate that six out of ten measures of parenting attitudes, behaviors and knowledge improved significantly from the pre- to the post-test, highlighting areas in which CCE Tompkins County parent education programs have a positive impact on their participants.
Visit the Parenting in Context project at:

http://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/outreach/parenting/

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Eliza Lathrop Cook is a Masters of Public Administration Fellow in the Cornell Institute of Public Affairs at Cornell University.

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

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