



# Parent Education Programs

<http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/index.php>

## EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Providing Solutions*

### Relevance

Although children are influenced by many different elements in their environment, parents are the primary influence in the lives of their children (NICHD, 2006). Parents' contributions to their children's development are unparalleled, especially during their early childhood years. Research indicates that children who grow up with actively involved and nurturing parents (as opposed to uninvolved parents) reap numerous benefits, including better school performance, increased self-esteem, healthier relationships with peers, healthier sex-role development, and greater access to financial resources. In addition, children who are raised in environments in which parents are fully involved are less likely to engage in behaviors that put them at risk for a variety of physical and mental health problems.

Research suggests that quality educational programs can assist parents in developing the skills they need to effectively raise their children (CDC, 2009). The qualities/skills that are common to effective parents (e.g., unwavering love, sensitivity to a child's needs and feelings, clear and consistent limits geared toward a child's stage of development, firm but not

harsh discipline, encouragement of child's emerging independence, parental involvement in child's education, being a positive role model) can be taught through a series of parenting education classes that allow parents the opportunity to discuss and practice the desired skills.

### Response

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides Texas parents with a wide variety of research-based information and resources to assist them in their efforts to raise healthy children. In addition to newsletters, fact sheets, and single-session parenting seminars, AgriLife Extension offers parents, grandparents, and other caregivers the opportunity to participate in county AgriLife Extension agent and volunteer led parenting programs designed to increase participants' knowledge of key parenting concepts and to improve parenting practices. The following programs are currently being offered statewide.

**Parenting Connections.** Parenting Connections is a four-week parenting education series developed by AgriLife Extension. The curriculum is divided into four 1-2 hour lessons covering the following topics:

- Child Growth and Development,
- Parent-Child Communication,
- Self-Esteem, and
- Guidance and Discipline.

The curriculum is general in scope and can be used with parents of children from birth to the teenage years. Each lesson is structured in a similar way and contains a PowerPoint slide presentation with a script, participant handout, activity, and in-session evaluation.



**Strengthening Families Program.** The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a six-week parenting skills-based program that focuses on improving parenting practices and child behavior. Key concepts covered in the curriculum include:

- Developmental Expectations and Stress Management;
- Goals, Objectives, and Rewards;
- High-Risk Children;
- Communication, Problem-solving, and Giving Directions;
- Limit Setting; and
- Implementing the Behavior Plan and Maintaining Good Behavior.

Results from SFP have demonstrated that the program is effective at improving the level of parental involvement, family cohesion, parent-child communication, family organization, parental supervision, parental self-efficacy, and child behavior.

## Results

Results from a recent evaluation study with 326 parents who participated in the Parenting Connections series indicated that the program had a very positive impact on specific parenting practices. Statistically significant attitudinal and behavioral changes from pre to post occurred in the following areas: parent-child communication, parental self-efficacy (i.e., confidence in parenting skills), parental involvement, and use of positive disciplinary practices. In addition, parents reported a significant improvement in their children’s behavior after participating in the program. The following tables demonstrate the positive changes that occurred:

Percent Reporting “Frequently” or “Almost Always” from pre to post		
Parenting Behaviors	Pre	Post
Compliment child	57.4%	86.8%
Encourage child	60.8%	91.4%
Listen carefully to child	62.6%	93.0%
Criticize child	12.3%	8.3%
Confident in parenting skills	49.4%	82.6%
Set limits (rules) for child	46.6%	74.0%
Consistently enforce limits	44.5%	75.5%
Reason with child	40.5%	69.9%
Redirect child	41.4%	71.2%
Yell or scream at child	23.0%	11.1%
Use time-outs	27.6%	43.8%

Child’s Behavior from pre to post		
Child’s Behavior	Pre	Post
Excellent or Very Good	25.7%	54.6%
Adequate, Fair, or Poor	54.9%	26.9%

## Participant Quotes

- “I really like this class because I am learning a lot of new material that will help me now and in the future.”
- “I feel all adults need to attend this class.”
- “I found everything that was covered [to be] useful.”
- “[I learned] how to use more discipline and use it effectively, how to use positive reinforcement and positive praise, and how to better utilize communication with my husband to set down positive, behaviorally specific goals for our son.”

*Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating*

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