

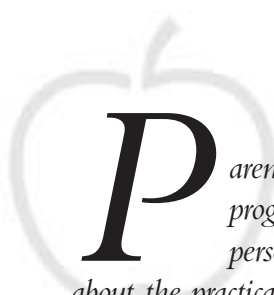
## Chapter VI: FAQs

### Frequently Asked Questions

*It may well be that the nation cannot survive—as a decent place to live, as a world-class power or even as a democracy—with such high rates of children growing into adulthood unprepared to parent . . .*

**Douglas W. Nelson**

Executive Director, Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Time*, June 3, 1996



**P**arenting education for children and teens involves many types of programs in many different communities, but parents, school personnel, and legislators often ask similar valuable questions about the practical applications of the programs.

*The following are questions commonly asked of parenting education advocates.*

*All students in the elementary, middle and high school should learn about the stages of infant development and the effects on infants of differing kinds of caregiver behavior. By the time these students become parents, the details may be forgotten, but the central messages of such courses are likely to endure: that prenatal care, attention and responsiveness to infant behavior are essential. Conveying those messages in elementary, secondary and high schools has the added benefit that future fathers as well as mothers will be exposed to them.*

**ZERO TO THREE**

National Center for Clinical Infant Programs  
*Heart Start: The Emotional  
Foundations of School Readiness*

### **At What Grade Levels Should Schools Provide Parenting Education?**

According to a 1999 public opinion survey conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 88 percent of adults favor parenting education at the high school level, 82 percent favor it at the middle school level, and nearly 70 percent favor its inclusion at elementary levels. Many experts believe that parenting education for children and teens works best when it begins early enough to shape attitudes and expectations. According to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, such education should begin in elementary school, and certainly no later than early adolescence.<sup>15</sup>

For maximum effectiveness, children should receive some parenting education sequentially over their years of schooling. Curricula should build on previous learning,

presenting increasingly complex aspects of parenting education. Age-appropriate parenting education curricula and programs are available for pre-kindergarten through high school, based on the needs of the community and its students. (See Chapter III, Programs.)

The emphasis in pre-kindergarten and the early elementary grades is on developing observational skills and empathy. Several curricula for primary and elementary students are anchored in monthly visits from a baby and his or her parent. Planning for the visit usually involves students making predictions about the baby's growth and development. The visits allow for observation of changes in the baby and how the parent adjusts to them.

Curricula for older students should be introduced well before pregnancy becomes an issue, probably no later than fifth grade. Parenting education is often included as modules in lifeskills and family and consumer sciences classes, health, biology, psychology, or other courses.

### **Is Parenting Education a Separate Course or Can It Fit into Existing Curricula?**

To be maximally effective, parenting education should be introduced as early as preschool and increase in complexity throughout the grades. It could be presented as a separate subject area in the elementary grades and in middle and high schools as a module in another course, such as lifeskills. However, most parenting education curricula can be readily integrated into existing subject areas at all grade levels. In the elementary grades, for example, social studies can incorporate a study of parenting practices in different cultures, and reading material can include selections of literature that include parenting topics. Programs that involve visits with babies frequently use record-keeping, journals, and other writing assignments. Parenting education can be incorporated into math; for example, a math assignment might involve adding and multiplying the cost of diapers and formula for a week, a month, or a year. Or students might be asked to graph a baby's height and weight over time. Parenting education might also be part of such subjects as science, history, art, and music.

Parenting education in higher grade levels can be integrated into many academic disciplines and is even successful in unexpected venues, such as English as a second language (ESL). Some schools also extend parenting education programs into tutoring, mentoring, or other student partnering experiences between younger and older students.

Components of parenting education are also an attractive vehicle for integrating related state requirements, standards, or guidelines. Most states require or recommend that districts follow guidelines for health education and family and consumer sciences education, all of which include parenting education topics. In middle and high school programs, parenting education might be taught in lifeskills or family and consumer sciences classes, either as part of an existing course, or as a stand-alone elective.

The Centers for Disease Control and the American School Health Association<sup>16</sup> promote Health Education that includes lessons on family living, growth and development, nutrition, injury prevention, communicable diseases, and other topics that are included in parenting education. Most existing parenting education programs offer expert assistance to help adapt programs to the needs of a particular school or district. (See Chapter III, Programs.)



### **What Training is Required to Teach Parenting Education?**

Parenting education is often taught in family and consumer sciences or health education courses by teachers who must be certified to teach in that area. Other parenting education programs are conducted by classroom teachers who usually participate in specialized training courses developed by the individual parenting education programs. Some programs are taught by specialists who work with classroom teachers. When the curriculum is well developed, experienced teachers can work from it directly, with little or no special training. Established programs vary in the amount of training required or recommended. Most existing programs incorporate plans, seminars, and workshops with varying levels of training to guide teachers in how to work with the curricula for maximum effectiveness. Continuing-education credit is usually available for the training programs.

One valuable aspect of much of the training offered by the various programs is that they enable teachers to network and share methodology with other parenting education teachers and to receive support from experts should difficult situations arise, such as how to handle a student's disclosure of parental abuse. Some well-established parenting education programs for school age children and teens and their training profiles are described individually in Chapter III.

### **What Are the Costs Associated with Developing and Implementing a Parenting Education Program?**

The costs of parenting education programs for children and teens are relatively low. Since they make use of existing staff, they operate on low overhead and are financially manageable for most schools and districts.

There are two types of costs. One is the fee for teacher training, which varies considerably from program to program. Much of this cost can be absorbed by the school district's allocation for expenditures related to continuing education credits. Parenting education programs will generally offer training onsite to avoid school travel costs and will accommodate the school's schedule to reduce the need for substitute teachers.

The second basic cost is that of materials, which also varies but is generally moderate. Many curricula offer inexpensive student workbooks and provide materials that can be readily duplicated. Some programs involve more expensive products like the infant simulator, or videotapes. (See Chapter III for details.)

### **What Funding Is Available to Support Parenting Education Programs?**

Parenting education programs for children and teens successfully attract support from a variety of sources.



## Creating a Fundraising Plan

Forming a nonprofit organization with a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status, or affiliating with an existing organization that can act as a conduit for donations, might be useful or necessary. Foundations often limit applications to nonprofits, and individual donors appreciate the tax deduction.

Success in fundraising draws on a few basic principles. Before seeking funds, write a mission statement, budget, and set of goals. Establish a target amount for funds to be raised, and be prepared to show potential funders a budget specifying how the money will be used. Formulate your pitches to emphasize the necessity and value of your program and its specific benefits to the people to be served, to each potential funder. Know how to present your program's financial needs and your ideas cogently and briefly, both verbally and in writing. Call on core group members, and even casual acquaintances, who can put you in touch with key decision makers in a funding organization. Inside contacts and personal relationships are invaluable, as are your own passion and commitment. (See Selected Resources.)

## Potential Sources of Funding

### *Support through Schools and Districts*

**School Discretionary Funds:** School principals or superintendents in some school districts have discretionary funds that can be used for innovative programs. Discretionary funds are often used for programs, such as parenting education for youth, which can enhance a school's reputation.

**Parent Organization Funds:** Parent organizations (PTA, PTO, PO) at schools often raise funds to support various school-based projects. They are usually open to creative projects that address newly identified needs.

**School District Local Funding:** School district funds are available almost everywhere, although the methods of distribution vary from district to district. Navigating the system can be aided greatly by connecting with people who are knowledgeable about the local process.

**School District State or Federal Funding to Schools:** Several federal or state initiatives provide funding for programs that address issues of safety, health, drugs, alcohol, or teen pregnancy prevention and responsible fatherhood. The application process begins with requests for proposals (RFPs) from government oversight agencies, such as the



federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, and state health departments. School districts, groups of schools, or, in some cases, individual schools might be eligible. Many require a working relationship with a university department that collaborates in the program planning and evaluation. School districts have grants offices that maintain information on possible sources, and the Federal Assistance Monitor, usually found in libraries, also lists U.S. government agencies that publish requests for proposals.

### *Support through Other Government Agencies*

**County or State Agency Grants to Organizations:** County and state agencies make grants to nonprofit groups for services to children, including teen pregnancy prevention, school violence prevention, and other services. Funds might be available from county human services funding, county children's funding, a local children's taxing district, or from state agencies. County board members and state legislative staff members are excellent sources of information on granting programs, as are interested school district administrators.

### *Other Local Sources of Support*

**Business and Corporate Donations:** Local and national businesses frequently set aside money for charitable giving. Likely targets are large locally based companies as well as national chains with branches in the community. Frequent contributors include banks, newspapers, and discount stores. Major corporations will sometimes match donations made by individual employees, and many also have foundations, as described below. Smaller and local businesses might be willing to donate products for fundraising events, including food, raffle prizes, and gifts. They will want to be convinced not only of the worthiness of the project but also of the concrete benefits that will accrue to their businesses; these can include exchange advertising, program credit, or public acknowledgment. Include this information in your request for support.

**Local Organizational Support:** Various community organizations raise and disburse charitable funds to local groups. Examples include Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, Junior League and other women's groups,



professional membership organizations, faith-based groups, and fraternities and sororities.

**Special Events:** An independent fundraising event, or one coordinated with a parents' organization or a school, can be a source of revenue.

Consider selecting an event that will generate publicity by drawing attention to the nature of parenting education. Seek sponsors among local businesses and look for events that will meet a specific financial goal.

**Individual Appeals:** Raise funds by appealing directly to personal contacts, employers, friends, neighbors, or others interested in community activities. Such appeals can be especially useful for *seed money* and for *challenge grants*, in which an individual or group agrees to match all that you raise.

### *Support through Foundations*

**Foundation Grants:** Thousands of foundations have grant programs that support projects related to parenting education. Such grants range from \$100 to more than \$1 million, are directed to or through a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity, a school, a school district, or another government agency.

Several categories of foundations to consider include local *community foundations*, local *education foundations*, and local *hospital conversion foundations* (formed with assets from the sale of a publicly owned hospital) that serve a particular geographic area; *corporate foundations* established as independent entities by large for-profit companies; and *private foundations* which derive their funds from wealthy individuals and range in size from small family-run foundations to complex operations with large professional staffs.

Foundations make decisions according to their own guidelines. Information about what, how, and when they fund is found on their websites, in grant-making guides online, in libraries, and in information that can be obtained directly from the foundation. (See Selected Resources.)

To approach a foundation, first create a prospect list. Further narrow down targets for applications by talking to a grants officer at the foundation to determine whether parenting education for children and teens is a comfortable fit there. Personal contacts and connections are extremely helpful.

### **What Evidence Is There That Parenting Education Is Effective?**

Parenting education for children and teens has been evaluated through questionnaires, expert observation, and educator and student feedback. In general, results show that students in these programs develop more empathy; cultivate skills for nonviolent communication; develop their cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, observing, and listening; build stronger family relationships; and are more inclined to postpone parenthood until they become adults. A University of Iowa Hospital<sup>17</sup> study found that without intervention, high school students had little knowledge of child development and child health concerns and that boys at all grade levels were unfamiliar with nonviolent disciplinary techniques.

When parenting education has been included in curricula, the results are impressive. A Michigan State University study<sup>18</sup> compared students from eight schools who had taken parenting education in courses such as lifeskills with a control group of students who had not. Students who participated in parenting education were more knowledgeable about child development; likely to recognize the influence that parents have on a child's development; likely to emphasize talking, reading, and "affectionate care;" and less likely to be overly authoritarian in discipline. Similarly, a Pennsylvania State University<sup>19</sup> study found that the teaching of child development and parenting in home economics programs significantly improved the knowledge and attitudes of students on those subjects in relationship to comparison groups.

Individual parenting education programs have also conducted evaluations, and have been researched independently. Some evaluations are described in Chapter III, under Summary Evaluations of School-Based Programs.

In summary, these evaluations show that participating students:

- learned nurturing skills and improved their abilities to solve problems without resorting to violence;
- showed an increased level of empathy and better understanding of infant and child development;
- became more caring and accepting of differences of others;
- remembered information about child development, positive discipline, and the realities of raising children; and
- were more likely as teenagers to defer pregnancy.



## How Can Potential Conflicts between Home and School Be Mitigated?

Parenting education for children and teens deals, in part, with values, so disagreements are bound to arise. It is important, therefore, for advocates and practitioners to be sensitive to possible conflicts and to be prepared to deal with them.

A basic principle of parenting education is that good parenting is not a one-size-fits-all formula. Parenting education for children and teens teaches that there is no single right way to be a parent and that there are a variety of effective parenting styles. Using curricula that are sensitive to the socioeconomic, cultural, and family configurations in their communities, the programs should prepare teachers to be sensitive to a variety of parenting styles and cultural differences in parenting approaches. It is also a good idea to reach out to involve families in the program, from the planning through the implementation and review phases.

Prior to implementation of a parenting education program, parents usually receive information about its goals and content. Many programs or schools require parental consent. An orientation meeting is often held. Parents are encouraged to discuss program activities with their children and to communicate concerns to the teacher. Some schools offer parallel programming for parents as their children learn.

Homework activities that involve parents enhance family communication. Parents might be invited to visit class sessions and participate. In some cases, the programs help bring new parenting information into students' homes. For example, many parents believe that spanking or other physical punishments are effective in socializing children. Parenting education familiarizes older students and parents with research that shows that corporal punishment can be harmful and that much more effective methods can be used. Parenting education teaches the importance of communicating and solving problems without hitting, threats, or insults and demonstrates specific techniques for disciplining without resorting to emotional or physical punishment.

Sensitive situations can arise, however, particularly if students divulge instances of abuse and neglect. Most school districts prepare teachers with appropriate responses and procedures, including mandatory reporting of child abuse. Teacher training for parenting education also offers guidance to educators on handling these situations.

Abstinence education and sexuality education are not part of parenting education (although some schools or districts may integrate or sequence them with parenting education). Sometimes, in studying parenting, students ask questions related to reproduction and sexuality. Teachers prepare for this possibility in training courses and develop appropriate responses in accordance with school policies.

