



HELPING CREATE A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

9,616

parent and caregiver participants in 2020 MSU Extension early childhood and family development programs

483

MSU Extension early childhood and family development educational sessions offered in 2020

PRIORITY

A R E A S

Michigan State University Extension provides early childhood and family development programs that help parents, caregivers, childcare providers and other important adults in the lives of children from birth to age 8 develop important skills. These programs focus on:

- **School readiness.**
- **Social emotional development.**
- **Positive life skill development.**

IMPACTS

As a result of MSU Extension early childhood and family development programs, adults increased their knowledge of basic concepts that promote school readiness and positive life skills development during the early childhood stages. These improvements help adults ensure children have the building blocks they need for future success. Of participants surveyed in 2020:



99%

understood the importance of actively supporting a child's learning.



99%

said they were prepared to support learning and growth in the program area.



99%

understood how the topic presented connects to healthy development.



99%

said they now had techniques to help young children.

For more information about MSU Extension's early childhood and family development programs and resources, contact earlychildhood@msu.edu or visit us online.

“The information in the classes work with all ages and even on myself. Absolutely grateful for this gift to my family – a better version of me which makes the whole family run smoother.”

—Early childhood program participant



MOM AND DAUGHTER TURN THE PAGE WITH THE HELP OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT SERIES

After seeing an individual in two back-to-back child and family development education series, MSU Extension program instructor Courtney Aldrich got to know the eager participant. A mother to a teenage daughter, the woman had completed Guiding Principles for Highly Successful Parenting, a series that helps parents explore ways they can be most effective in raising their children to be successful in school and life. The mom was now taking a second series Aldrich offered, Parent Talk, where individuals learn a style of communication that models and promotes respect, encourages appropriate behavior, and effectively delivers consequences and positive discipline when children choose inappropriate behaviors.

Aldrich learned the mom had struggled with substance abuse from a young age and as a mother. Upon getting clean, the woman was doing her best to parent differently but had no knowledge base to help change her approach. After the first MSU Extension child and family class, the woman was so excited about what she had learned she decided to follow Aldrich to her next offering.

"I never knew about any of this before and it works," said the participant.

Throughout the six-week series, the woman continued to share her weekly successes and challenges. After a class about routines, the woman implemented a routine for her and her daughter and proudly announced she had gotten her daughter to school on time for the first time all year as a result. After learning about the importance of offering kids choices, the woman shared that her daughter loved having options and responded positively by offering assistance without being asked. The woman even remarked that her daughter's therapist had seen so much progress they could soon end their treatment.

"What you have taught me has changed my life," remarked the woman. "When I think of the top five people who have changed my life, you are in the top five!"

"It was heartening and exhilarating to be part of that process," said Aldrich. "This parent's success was in her openness to trying new things, believing it could work and giving it all her dedication and energy."

ADDRESSING NEW CHALLENGES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the world in 2020, MSU Extension's child and family development team worked quickly to adapt their classes and information to alternative formats that could be delivered online. Among one of their earliest and ongoing successes was their Facebook page, MI Stronger Family.

In early March 2020, the MI Stronger Family page had less than 400 followers. Just one month into the pandemic, the page had grown to more than 2,000 followers as the child and family development team offered tips on talking to children about the coronavirus, strategies for managing stress and emotional wellness programs such as yoga. On March 30, the team launched Extension Extras, a weekly series of tips and activities to help those who suddenly found themselves at home juggling remote work, virtual learning, and other struggles.

Extension Extras provided consistent messaging and tools when caregivers desperately needed support. Offerings included Mindful Mondays, helping families to develop mindfulness habits and self-control; Tips on Tuesday, parenting tips on how to support children's emotional and social wellness; Working Wednesdays, strategies for helping youth to set routines and participate in chores; Thinking Thursdays, academic learning activities focused on math, science and early literacy; and Fun on Friday, a fun activity, craft or game for families to enjoy together.

Throughout the pandemic, MI Stronger Family's Extension Extras met parents where they were by providing much sought-after information in social media feeds. Posts were consumed at high rates, receiving up to 77,000 views while one video about managing stress was watched 3,000 times. The popular series continues today.