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This thesis submitted by Renée Ann Archambault Lach in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University
is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

RESOURCES AND COMPUTER USE OF PARENT EDUCATORS

IN MINNESOTA

by

Renée Ann Archambault Lach

B.E.S., St. Cloud State University, 1981

[Signature]
Chairperson
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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

[Signature]
of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

[Signature]
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Dean

School of Graduate and Continuing Education

May, 2000

This thesis submitted by Renée Ann Archambault Lach in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

Renée Ann Archambault Lach

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The majority of parent educators reported they would consider using the Internet as a resource if training were provided. Although there were some barriers to using the Internet, the overwhelming response was positive and supportive of this resource.

The researcher recommends that parent educators be trained to use computers and the Internet. The use of the Internet in parent education could benefit the families parent educators are serving through support.

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RESOURCES AND COMPUTER USE OF PARENT EDUCATORS IN MINNESOTA

There have been many people supporting me in this journey to complete this thesis. I want to thank Dr. Renée Ann Archambault Lach for her insights at my preliminary trials. I want to thank Dr. Dory Renna for graciously accepting the invitation to join the committee when Jeanne was teaching in London Spring Semester and I was in London.

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Special thanks go to my husband, Tony, who has been and will be my best friend for life. He helped make this a reality by being there for the kids when I was in London, typing or just procrastinating! He was there for me whenever I needed to give thanks for keeping me sane.

April 2000
Month Year

Approved by Research Committee:

Finally, I need to thank God for His love and grace. He gave me the ability to complete this project and the opportunity to share it with you. Thank you, Lord!

Glen Palm
Glen Palm Chairperson

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I returned to school to be a role model for my children Joseph, Steven, Brian and Kevin. I wanted to encourage them to have the same goal of lifelong learning that I have. I am thankful for their love and support and hopefully I'll never hear the words, "You're going to St. Cloud, again?" from them. I love you guys!

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Finally, I need to thank God for His grace and love. He gave me the ability to complete this project and the opportunity to serve Him for His glory. Praise the Lord!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past 20 years, more and more “experts” have appeared on the scene to tell parents how to raise their children. Many features of family life have changed from the 1950s typical American family consisting of a working father and a stay-at-home mother with one or two children. Today there are many different definitions of family including two parent, single parent, grandparents raising grandchildren without their parents, gay and lesbian couples to name a few.

Parent education programs are growing in number and becoming increasingly diverse in the way they try to service the needs of families today. Carter (1996), author of a recent study of American parenting education for the Pew Charitable Trusts, has estimated that more than 50,000 parenting programs are reaching millions of parents and caregivers every day. Parent education crosses many different institutions from the public school systems, to religious organizations, and through the health community. Terminology used besides parent education includes parent empowerment, family education, family life education, parent support and family support.

“American parents recognize that parenting is important and that they can benefit from help in meeting their parenting duties” (Kagan, 1995, p. 1). Parent education programs enhance parents’ overall competence, knowledge of child development, and capacities to parent more effectively.

The history of one specific area of parent education called Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) began in Minnesota with six pilot programs in 1974 when the Legislature passed a draft from the Council on Quality Education (Minnesota Council on Quality Education, 1974). In 1975, the program size was doubled by the Senate. According to the 1999 FACT SHEET from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning (1999) based on data from the 1997-98 annual report, ECFE is offered in 350 school districts and the 4 tribal schools in Minnesota. These districts encompass more than 99% of the 0-4 population in the state. ECFE involves more young children and their families than any other publicly sponsored early childhood program or service in Minnesota. Over 293,000 children and parents participated in ECFE during 1997-98. This is approximately 42% of Minnesota's children ages birth to kindergarten. There were over 10,000 families referred to ECFE by human services, medical personnel, and the judicial system during 1997-98. ECFE staff also conducted over 15,000 home visits in conjunctions with other agencies (Children, Families, and Learning, 1999).

The Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades praised ECFE in an article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune (Cummins, 1996) that stated, "we need more parent support and education programs—such as Minnesota's ECFE—available to all families" (p. A1). The task force cited ECFE as a model program.

The philosophy of ECFE is that home is a child's first school and that parents are a child's first and most important teachers. Its mission is to strengthen families through the education and support of all parents in providing the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. ECFE offers parent education classes to families birth to kindergarten age. They may include parent

only classes with child-care provided, parent education classes with a parent/child interaction component, special family events or parties, home visits and field trips.

While the majority of participants in ECFE are mothers and their children, fathers are recognized as having very important roles in the growth and development of their children. Palm and Johnson (1992) emphasized that parent education is an effective way to support men who are becoming more involved fathers. They believe that men can and must have more opportunities for learning about the knowledge base of child development and family life and will benefit from this knowledge.

Parent educators who teach in ECFE are required to be licensed by the state of Minnesota through the Department of Children, Families, and Learning (Minnesota State Board of Teaching, 1989). They must meet the minimum requirements of knowledge and skills in early childhood development, adult education, classroom management, family systems/relationships, group process, and have successfully completed a student teaching experience in an ECFE program.

When serving the many diverse families throughout Minnesota, parent educators are challenged to set up an environment that is comfortable and inviting to families. They have to understand the basic fundamentals of family dynamics and development. They have to have resources that are consistent with the ECFE philosophy and also be sensitive to the specific population they serve.

Individual ECFE programs are frequently housed in elementary schools, churches, and storefront malls called family centers. Family centers can serve as linkage agents to increase communication between schools and families. They can also share many types of resources, including book and toy lending libraries. Some family centers have computers available for parent use. Parent education through family centers connects families, schools, and the community. Children's academic and social

success are expanded through these flexible resources and activities. Such programs reflect their belief that parents are “their children’s first teachers,” and want to work as partners with professional teachers (Johnson, 1996, p. 22).

Today’s families in Minnesota have access to parent information through many sources. They have religious organizations, workplace seminars, day care centers, hospitals, community education programs including ECFE, as well as the use of the Internet.

According to Simpson (1997), “industry analysts from many segments of the media—cable television, television news, magazines, the Internet, newspaper features—share a common perception that parents want more information about parenting, including from the media, and that it is becoming increasingly acceptable for parents to seek out information” (p. 23).

Parenting has changed a lot in the last 100 years and so has technology. From the introduction of the telephone in the 1890s, cars in the 1920s, television in the 1940s, the video game empire of the 1980s, to the 1990s where children are going “on line” on a super information highway called the Internet. Professional experience and inferences drawn from theory based on related research, make a strong case that the media influences parents’ attitudes and behaviors, and hence child outcomes according to Simpson (1997).

Parents have a history of seeking out information from the written media through parenting books, newsletters, magazines, and newspapers. Electronic mediums including cable television, films, local and national news programs, public television, software and the Internet are all part of the mass media. All are expanding in rapid growth. The demands for information from parents continue to increase. Simpson (1997) cited a survey by the Commonwealth Fund that found that 79% of

parents of young children would like more information in at least one major area of parenting (Young, Davis, & Schoen, 1996). The nonprofit organization Zero to Three 1997 survey reported that parents are looking for information and advice to understand and respond to their children as well as ways to influence them in positive ways (Zero to Three, 1997).

The language of technology can be confusing and intimidating. The Internet is a global system of computer networks. The World Wide Web (WWW) is a part of this system. E-mail, the electronic mail messenger via computers wired to other computers through phone lines, is quickly becoming a preferred way of communication. America on Line (AOL) and many of the other Internet providers are expanding services into the home for \$21.95 or less a month, including some completely free services.

Anyone who is "online" can have free e-mail accounts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to survey parent educators about the resources and computer technology they currently use. Are parents looking to parent educators in ECFE for help and support in this new wave of technology? Are ECFE parent educators prepared to help parents navigate through the endless amount of parenting information that is available? How will they empower parents to be selective in the sources that are in the media?

Research Questions

As a children's teacher for 15 years and as a newly licensed parent educator in an ECFE program, this researcher recently became active at "surfing the web." It led me to question what resources are being used by parent educators and how many of my colleagues are also using the Internet as a resource for parent education.

1. What are the primary sources for information?
2. How have computers (at work and at home) impacted teaching in parent education?
3. What are the interests and needs of parent educators to acquire the knowledge and training to educate parents in the use, benefits, and risks of the Internet?
4. What are their current uses of the mass media resources and the Internet for parent education?
5. What are their attitudes about using the Internet as a resource for parents/parent education?
6. How accessible is the Internet for work purposes? What are the barriers to using the Internet?

It is my belief that some of the information on the Internet about children and parents is developmentally accurate, research based, and a valid source of data. The use of the Internet may be a time-saving tool because it can be accessed anytime of the day or night. The Internet also allows access to information not otherwise available from home, school, or libraries. It is my belief that if parent educators have training, time available, access to computers and Internet connections, they may be able to integrate Internet resources into their curriculum planning.

Definitions

Before someone can even begin to understand how things work on the Internet, they need to know the language. These definitions of an online glossary will be helpful throughout this study. They were compiled from various sources including: Using the

Internet: WWW Pages Featuring Education (Dabbs, 1996) and The Internet and Early Childhood Educators: Some Frequently Asked Questions (Rothenberg, 1995).

Browser: A “search engine” that is powerful and flexible to “search” the Internet to find links around the Web; two examples are Netscape and America Online.

E-mail (electronic mail): A message sent over the Internet from one user to another. It usually only takes seconds for a message to reach any online destinations in the world. You can “attach” programs, files, or graphics to e-mail messages.

Hotlink/Link: Highlighted text (underlined or color coded) that contains a hidden link to other related text. If you click on the mouse, the browser will pop you over to the area you’ve selected.

Http:// (HperText Transport Protocol): This is the protocol or language, an agreed upon set of rules that allows incompatible machines or software to communicate.

Internet: A worldwide system made up of many computer networks. Any computers that are connected to the Web can reach each other to exchange information and resources.

URL (Universal Resource Locator): The “address” that you type in to get to a page or site (Pronounced “earl” or U-R-L). The following abbreviations come at the end of a URL: “.com” stands for “commercial site,” “.org” is an “organization,” “.edu” is an “educational site,” “.gov” is a “government site” and “.net” is a “network site.”

In addition, important definitions related to parent education are:

Parent education is to strengthen families for the healthy growth and development of their children. Parent education may include information and support.

Parent education in ECFE has the goal to support children's optimal physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development during the important early years of development. It is designed for parents and their children birth to prekindergarten age and is based on the recognition that the home is the child's first learning environment and that parents are the primary and most influential teachers (Wayzata School District, Winter/Spring, 2000).

Parent education may address the social, economic, and informational needs of the family while encouraging the development and effective use of community resources. Parent education involves enhancing effective communication and healthy parent-child/family relationships. Parent education may also provide resources to prevent child abuse, family violence and other negative family outcomes.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may be beneficial for ECFE programs in Minnesota. Parent educators will have the opportunity to learn what primary resources other parent educators use, possibly expanding their own resources. Programs may be motivated to lobby their districts for computers and training for parent education use. This study may assist programs by providing Internet addresses on parent education to program coordinators. ECFE parent educators were given the option to be individually provided with a list of the resources other educators use and a list of the Internet addresses that has been compiled throughout this research project. One additional significant outcome may be the awareness that the Internet may be a valid source for developmentally accurate and research based data that could be beneficial for parent education.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A computer search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) from 1992 to 1998 was completed using the following descriptors: parent education, educators using Internet, professionals using Internet, adult learners, technology in parent education, parent education resources, parent education curriculum, training for parent educators, teachers on the Internet, Internet parenting resources and mass media in parent education. The descriptors that provided the most articles were parent education, teachers and the Internet, Internet resources, and technology.

History

There is not a long history to report about parent education and the Internet. There is not a great deal written on this subject area because parent education is still a growing field and the Internet is relatively new. Less than a decade ago, this study would not have been a possibility. *Newsweek* magazine declared 1995 the "year of the Internet" because of this technology's pervasive influence on cultural life (Levy, 1995). One document that was accessed through the ERIC search was about how to use the Internet and it featured how to use the World Wide Web for educational searches (Dabbs, 1996). There were many Web site addresses given in this article that are listed in Appendix E.

Svensen (1997) described the Internet as a global system of computer networks in the Tech Talk section of an article in *Parent Power* newsletter. "Originally created by the U. S. military in 1969, it was then adopted by scientists and scholars to share current information and resources" (p. 1). In 1990, Berners-Lee offered the solution to share information and data among laboratories across the world with different types of computer hardware and software (cited in Schatz & Hardin, 1994). Berners-Lee combined networked information and hypertext that resulted in the World Wide Web. No one owns it or runs it. Svensen (1997) cited technology expert and syndicated columnist Larry Magid as he suggested thinking of the Internet as a worldwide highway system where you can get from any other highway, though not necessarily by a direct route. The World Wide Web (from now on referred to as the www) is a part of the Internet. Svensen suggested we think of it as a traffic facilitator that makes traveling the Internet easier.

There are a variety of measures of the growth of the Internet. In 1999, it was estimated that 37% of households had computers and 19% were connected to the Internet (National Telecommunications, 1998). Matrix Information and Directory Services (MIDS) (1998) reported that the number of servers has grown from less than 200,000 in 1990 to over 30 million in 1998. These numbers point to a conclusion that information technology has become increasingly part of everyday life for many people.

Use of the Internet for General Education

Students and educators at all levels are among the throngs of people gathering at the www's window on the Internet. Thousands of schools and educational organizations across the nation have set up Web servers and home pages (Dabbs,

1996). The Internet allows access to libraries, museums, and virtual tours of foreign places that would not otherwise be available from our homes or schools. Documents can be read or e-mailed that just a few years ago would not have been accessible by the general public.

Another example of an educational benefit is the possibility of earning a diploma from a college by someone who is homebound. Hughes, Ebata, and Dollahite (1999) reflected on the impact of technology going online as a learning environment for educating professionals in family life. Many universities such as Western Governor's University have begun to explore the delivery of course work via information technologies (Hughes et al., 1999). There are examples of in service training for professionals using satellite technology combined with the Internet (e.g., Broadcasting the Good News about Parent Education; <http://bluehen.ags.udel.edu/strength/parenting/>).

Use of the Internet by Educators

Lake (1995) summarized the Internet as (a) a place to talk, (b) a place to get organized information, and (c) a place to organize and put information. Rothenberg (1995) stated, "recently, early childhood educators at all levels and early childhood teacher education students have begun to use the Internet to communicate and to share information" (p. 2). In *Telecommunications and K-12 Educators: Findings from a National Survey*, Honey and Henriquez (1993) suggested that use of electronic networking can help teachers (especially new teachers) reduce their sense of isolation, connect with peers and increase their sense of professionalism and autonomy.

As with learning any new skill, the willingness of the learner and the amount of support will determine whether or not the learner will be resistant or eager to learn. As

it is possible to increase Internet knowledge and access to early childhood information for early childhood teachers, it is my belief that parent educators could also benefit from this electronic networking.

Networking and e-mail have been improved communications within and between buildings in school settings. Staff are using e-mail to share ideas with each other and with other professionals. Accessing the Internet has captured the attention of teachers who were not previously interested in technology, and in many situations the Internet has become a major information resource (Anderson, 1997).

Use of the Internet as a Professional Tool

Baumbach (1998) described the Internet as a professional tool.

Most good teachers are always looking for new ways to make learning more effective for their students, including new techniques and new ideas. By showing them how to access the Internet from home or school, they can enhance their professional development and classroom performance. Educators can become energized and refreshed by talking and collaborating with other like-minded people through e-mail, discussion groups or list-serves. (p. 26)

Baumbach (1998) also stated, "Teacher training is a crucial part of the classroom technology equation. Without ongoing training and support, the Internet may become another technology full of unrealized potential. This is a mistake we cannot afford to make" (p. 28). Baumbach gave another reason to become more computer literate now. "In this ever-changing, fast-paced world we live in, it would become easy to fall behind. What may be a good skill to have right now will become an essential skill in a short time" (p. 27).

Kosakowski (1998) agreed that the use of computers and information technologies by teachers has improved their role in the educational process. Using computer tools to streamline record keeping and administrative tasks; decreasing

isolation by using e-mail and the Internet to communicate with colleagues, parents, and the outside world; and increasing professional development activities by taking distance education courses, accessing educational research, and accessing classroom materials such as lesson plans.

Use of the Internet by Critical Evaluators

Teachers need to learn to look at the Internet resources with a critical eye. Unlike print that has been published in hardcopy, anyone can make information available through the Internet. Because anyone can put anything on the www, there can be harmful information mixed in with the good. Some advice is often confusing and conflicting. "Educators need to understand and evaluate information for accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and relevancy" (Baumbach, 1998, p. 27).

Experts are concerned that parents are sometimes so starved for information that they seek it indiscriminately, and media provide information without regard to whether its impact may be undermining rather than strengthening childrearing. Parent educators have the opportunity to help parents learn to be discriminating and selective about the information they have accessed. Parent educators are also using a variety of criteria to evaluate the difference between opinions, accuracy reflected by consistent, current knowledge about parenting and children, and fact based research.

Use of the Internet by Parents

Littlefield (1996) wrote that the www allows parents from all over the world to share child-rearing experience and advice. She estimated the Internet population to be in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions—a group that represents scores of different cultures and backgrounds. However, there is reason to be concerned that most parents who use the www are upper middle class and, therefore, the Internet is

limited until it can expand into the homes of rural, poor, and inner-city parents. Littlefield stated, "The Baby Boomer's parenting years are coinciding with the explosion of the Internet. As more people gain Internet access and the Net matures, the parenting community should only get larger and the resources better" (p. 40).

Parenting is one of the most popular family education topics on the Internet. There are family/parent links from several of the most frequently used servers—AOL, Netscape, and Earthlink.

The National Parenting Education Network (NPEN) is committed to advancing the field of parenting education. Despite phenomenal growth in this young field, there existed relatively little organizational support specifically focused on networking, professional growth, knowledge development and standard-setting among this important group of practitioners. One of their principles is to have Universal Access: NPEN takes the position that one goal of parenting education is to provide access to parenting education resources for all parents (Robertson, 1998). Parent educators may be an access point for parents to get to these valuable resources.

Use of the Internet by Parent Educators

Parent education in Minnesota was developed during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, parent educators in ECFE have the opportunity to take parent education into the 21st century by using new technology that supports their foundation that parents are their children's first and most important teachers. This researcher uses the Internet for searching for information on child development and family issues. I have been able to access information on developmental growth charts, sibling relationships, and activities for families to do together. My colleagues also use the Internet and, it is my belief, there are still more parent educators using this service. I also believe there are

many others that would use this resource if they were trained and had access to the Internet. There could be many benefits of using the Internet as a resource. Parent educators could access research-based information very quickly. They could do it from home or school any time of the day or night.

Summary

The Internet is here to stay. Based on the literature reviewed, there are potential benefits of using the Internet for parent educators. By sharing information through lesson plans and e-mail, the Internet has made information more accessible and has expanded the reach of the individual. It is this researcher's belief that there is enough information on the Internet about children and parents that is developmentally accurate, research based, and a credible source of data that would be a valuable resource for parents and parent educators. It is my belief that if parent educators have training, time available, access to computers and Internet connections, they may be able to integrate Internet information into their curriculum planning. Families could benefit from research studies, information from respected authors and support from educators who are using the Internet.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter includes the methods and procedures used for the collection and analysis of the data for this study. This researcher developed a questionnaire to survey current parent educators in the state of Minnesota about the resources they use to develop their curriculum for parent education in ECFE programs. The use of computers and the impact of the Internet in parent education today were also investigated. Data was collected from individual parent educators that responded and the results were analyzed.

Subjects and Sampling Technique

The researcher contacted the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning in Roseville, Minnesota. They provided computer-generated address labels for ECFE programs throughout the state of Minnesota. A letter of introduction to the research project (see Appendix A) was sent with the questionnaire to program coordinators and to potential participants (see Appendix B). Coordinators were requested to provide the letter of introduction and survey to parent educators on their staff. Staff sizes vary from small in rural communities to very large as in the Minneapolis and St. Paul districts.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire (see Appendix C) was developed by the researcher to inquire about the resources used by parent educators in developing lesson plans/curriculum and their use of computers at home and at work. The questions of whether parent educators have been trained for this new technology and what interest they have in using the Internet were also addressed. Those who use the Internet were asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this resource. They were also asked to comment on the criteria they use to evaluate the information they access on the Internet. The questionnaire was developed based on the basic research questions: what are the primary resources used, current use of computers at home and/or work, and attitudes about using the Internet. The questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group to determine clarity and refine confusing questions.

Procedure

The survey was mailed to 105 school districts as a stratified, random sample. There were 15 sent to urban programs. There were 20 sent to suburban programs. The remaining 70 surveys were sent to out-state rural programs. There were 105 surveys mailed to the ECFE program coordinators who were requested to copy them and distribute to the parent educators. The completed questionnaires represented 50% of the districts who were sent questionnaires. Completed surveys continued to arrive over a 3-week collection period. The total number of responses was 113. Of the 53 districts that replied, several districts included more than one parent education response.

Once the surveys were returned, they were coded by number and then separated by those with names and those without names. Participants were given the

option to include their names and addresses for follow up purposes or to remain anonymous. They could also indicate if they wanted to receive a survey summary and/or list of compiled Internet addresses when the study is completed. Of the 113 responses, 83 (73%) identified themselves and 30 remained anonymous.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire results were examined by the researcher and then tallied with MINITAB statistical software. Descriptive and demographic variables included current positions, district location, areas of licensure, years in parent education, number of hours worked in a typical week, age, marital status, education level, family income, whether or not a parent, and computer use at home and at work. The qualitative responses were compiled and analyzed for themes.

- Demographics
- Resources used in parent education
- Computer use at home and at work
- Learning about computers
- Internet availability at home and at work
- Questions parents ask about the Internet
- Advantages and disadvantages of the Internet
- Sources of Internet information
- Evaluative criteria
- Problems encountered with the Internet

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Data in this chapter represented a summary of the responses to the research questions asked in the survey. The return of 113 completed surveys yielded a rich database about the resources parent educators use to prepare their curriculum. While some of the results have been arranged in tables, most of the information is descriptive. The responses of the parent educators were very descriptive and enlightening. The questions and their responses are organized around the following basic areas:

- Demographics
- Resources used in parent education
- Computer use at home and at work
- Learning about computers
- Internet availability at home and at work
- Questions parents ask about the Internet
- Advantages and disadvantages of the Internet
- Sources of Internet information
- Evaluative criteria
- Problems encountered with the Internet

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Demographics

Current position. Of the 113 responses, 112 listed their current position as parent educator. One response listed program coordinator as current position while licensed as a parent educator. The following are categories of additional positions that were listed with the parent educator position:

- 19 work as both parent educator and children's teacher
- 8 are also home visitors
- 6 parent educators also teach/coordinate in Learning Readiness
- 12 are program coordinators and parent educators
- 1 is also an Assistant Professor of Nursing
- 1 is a community education director
- 3 also teach in special education.

Location. The surveys were sent to 15 city programs (14% of the 105 mailed out), 20 suburb (19% of the 105), and 70 rural districts (67% of the 105). There were 28 surveys returned from urban programs. This was approximately 25 % of the total responses. The suburban response was the highest with a count of 51. This was 46% of the total surveys. The number of responses from rural districts was 31 or a 28% portion of the total returned. Three surveys did not indicate a district location. There is no way to know the potential number of parent educators who would have participated in the study.

Individual educator characteristics. The results from the question about licensure showed there are many parent educators with more than one license. Licensure in elementary (K - 6) and secondary (7 - 12) were also represented. Family life, home economics, and family consumer science were included under the secondary umbrella. Other areas of licensure were early childhood, social work, early childhood special education, marriage and family therapy, and Registered Nursing (see Figure 1).

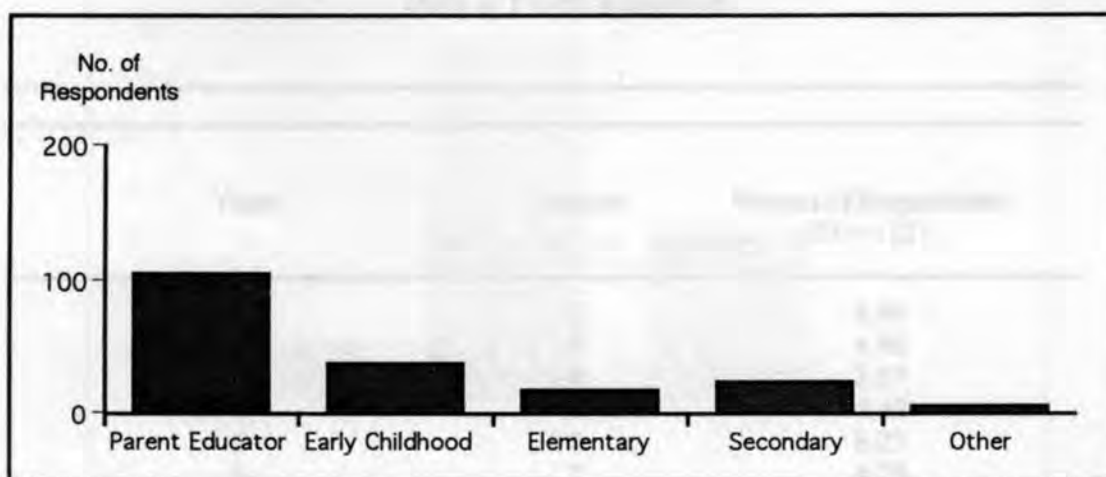


Figure 1

Areas of Licensure

ECFE started in Minnesota in 1974 with six pilot programs. As the number of programs grew, parent educators were needed to service the families that attended. Now, with over 300 programs, parent educators are working throughout the state. Some educators are working in more than one district. Every year new parent educators will begin their careers and experienced educators will mentor their new colleagues. A wide range of experienced to inexperienced parent educators responded

to this study. There is also a tremendous amount of experience reflected by the following table of data. The years of respondents working in parent education ranges from 1 year to 23 years (see Table 1). There were 26 (23%) respondents who had 1 to 5 years experience. Thirty-one (28%) had 6 to 10 years, 45 (40%) had 11 to 15 years, and 8 (7%) had 16 to 20 years experience. Two (2%) had over 20 years experience.

Table 1
Years in Parent Education

Years	Number	Percent of Respondents (N = 112)
1	5	4.46
2	5	4.46
3	4	3.57
4	5	4.46
5	7	6.25
6	7	6.25
7	9	8.04
8	4	3.57
9	3	2.68
10	8	7.14
11	7	6.25
12	5	4.46
13	6	5.36
14	1	11.61
15	14	12.50
16	2	1.70
17	1	0.89
18	1	0.89
20	4	3.57
21	1	0.89
23	1	0.89

Hours worked in a typical week. The numbers of hours worked in a typical week varied from a minimum of 1 hour to a maximum of 50 hours. Less than 10 hours a week were reported by 11 respondents (10%), 11 to 34 hours a week were reported by 68 respondents (61%), and 32 respondents (29%) reported working 35 or more hours a week. See Figure 2.

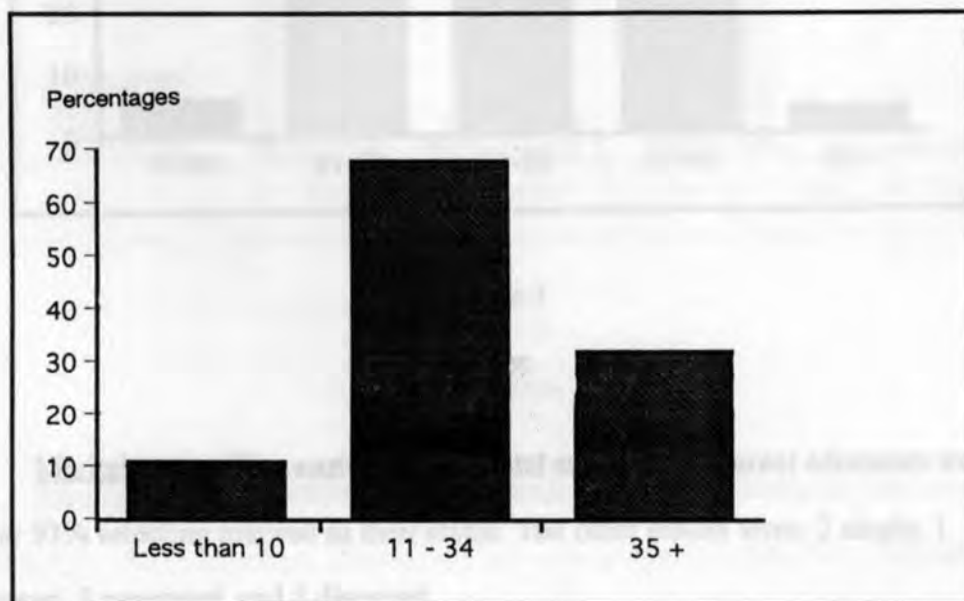


Figure 2

Hours Per Week Worked

Age. The ages of the parent educators who responded reflect their many years of experience. There were six in the 20- to 30-year range, each with less than 5 years teaching experience. There were four who were over 60 years in age. Of those four, two have 15+ years experience and two have less than 9 years experience. The 30 to 50 age range represented 77% of the total (see Figure 3).

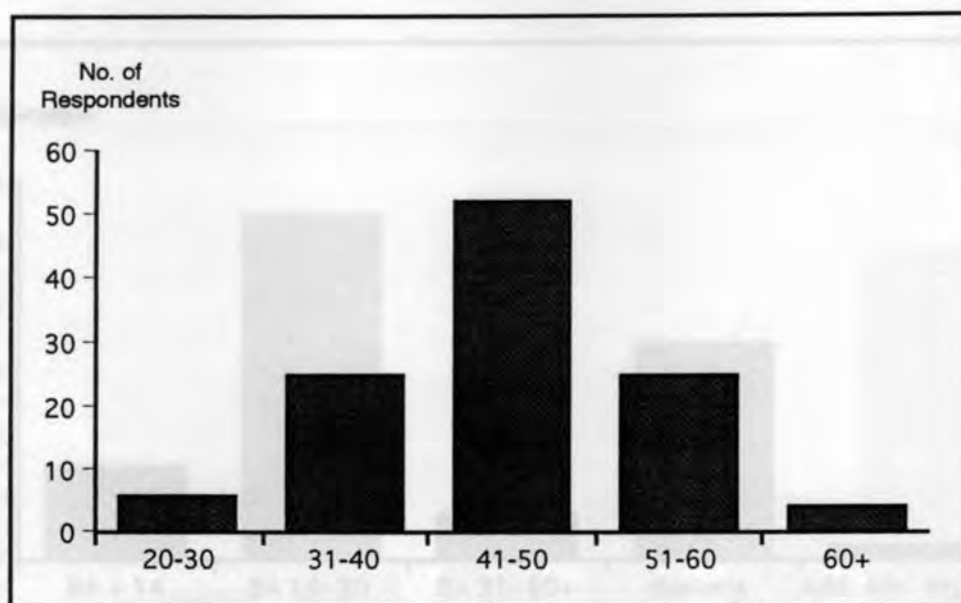


Figure 3

Ages

Marital status. The results of the marital status of the parent educators were 101 or 93% selecting married as their status. The other results were: 2 single, 1 partnered, 2 separated, and 3 divorced.

Levels of education. A bachelor degree is required to be licensed in parent education in Minnesota. The majority (97) had a bachelors degree plus at least 15 additional credits. There were 54 (48%) with 15-30 additional credits, and 34 (30%) with a Master's degree. Two respondents indicated additional advanced degrees beyond Master's. Figure 4 shows a complete breakdown of the educational status on the respondents.

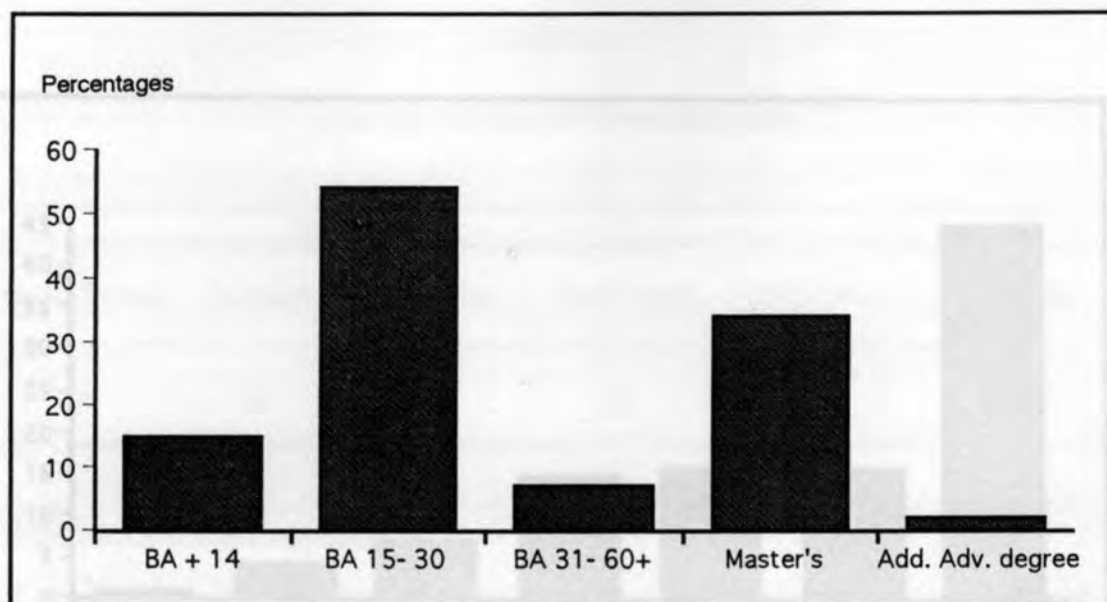


Figure 4

Education

Family income. The family gross income showed one family had an income in the \$10,000—\$20,000 range. Eleven families were in the \$20,000—\$30,000 range. Almost half (47%) were in the next ranges of \$40,000—\$70,000. The last option was the \$70,000+ range and 45 parent educators (43%) were in this family income level. The mean income was the \$50,000—\$60,000 range. Figure 5 shows the different income levels.

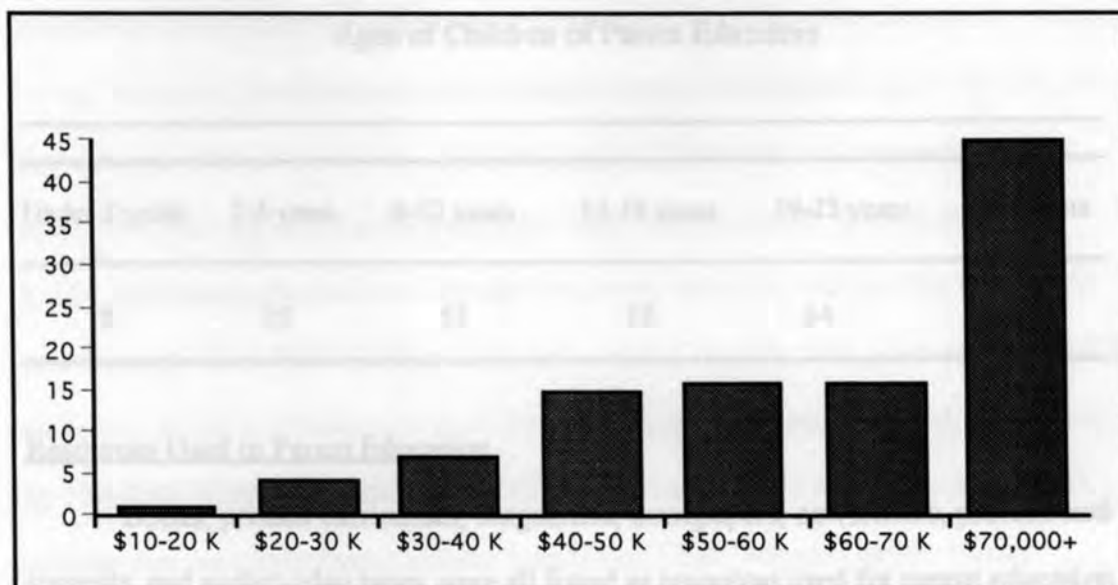


Figure 5
Family Income Levels

Ages of children. Are parent educators parents themselves? Of the 112 surveys that were returned, 109 marked yes. The parent educators who responded do have children! And lots of them. The combined number of children from all the responses were 283 children between the ages of “under 2 to 26+” years. Many had children in two or more age ranges. There were 166 (59%) under the age of 18. There was a large group of adult children (53) (N = 112). Table 2 has the totals by age groups.

Marriage	68	60
Family Information Services	56	58
Practical Guidelines	58	58
Newsletters	42	51
Professional Journals	43	46
Internet	36	22
Audio/Video Tapes	28	23
Conferences	16	18
Workshops, seminars, symposia	17	14
Other parent education	13	13
Subtotal and/or preferred item	3	8

Table 2

Ages of Children of Parent Educators

Under 2 years	2-5 years	6-12 years	13-18 years	19-25 years	26+ years
8	15	55	88	64	53

Resources Used in Parent Education

Books, printed curriculum, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, professional journals, and audio/video tapes were all listed as resources used for parent education. School or personal files, other parent educators, and workshops were also mentioned. The resource and it's frequency of use is listed below (see Table 3).

Table 3

Best Resources/Used Most Frequently

	Tally Rate	Percentage (N = 113)
Books	91	81
Magazines	68	60
Family Information Services	66	58
Printed Curriculums	58	58
Newsletters	52	51
Professional Journals	25	46
Internet	24	22
Audio/Video Tapes	20	21
Newspapers	16	18
Workshops, seminars, speakers	16	14
Other parent educators	15	13
School and/or personal files	9	8

Each resource that was listed was counted once. Several times a respondent would list three or four resources and indicate they were used most frequently. Each “most frequently used” response was counted in the individual category. Books were listed as the best resource with a tally rate of 91. Of those 91, 47 respondents said books are what they used most frequently. One educator wrote she had over 300 books. Alphabetically listed are the top five book: *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, *Kids are Worth It* by Barbara Coloroso, *Touchpoints* by T. Berry Brazelton, *Without Spanking or Spoiling* by Elizabeth Crary and *Your Spirited Child* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka. Additional authors that were mentioned include Jean Illsley Clark, Magda Gerber, Nancy Samalin, William Doherty and “anything by Brazelton.” There were over 35 book titles submitted in the surveys (see Appendix D for a complete list).

Magazines were ranked second as the next best resource (N = 68) and 24% of those respondents indicated they use magazines most frequently. *Parents* magazine was listed most frequently by 24 respondents followed by *Child*, *Family Fun*, and *Parenting* magazines.

Family Information Services (FIS) in Minneapolis, Minnesota was the third choice as a parenting information resource. One response said “FIS is the best. I use it all the time.” FIS was listed by 66 respondents and 41% said they use it most frequently.

Printed curriculums were listed by 58 respondents. Twenty people (34%) said they use printed curriculums most often. One first year educator said “I use it because I’m still trying to find my own individuality.” The most frequent curriculum listed was *Positive Parenting* from the University of Minnesota. *STEP* (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting), and *Early Childhood STEP* were listed next with the most

frequency. *Parent Making*, *Parenting Works*, *MOTHEREAD/FATHEREAD*, and *Active Parenting* were also listed on the surveys.

Newsletters were the next most often selected choice. They were listed by 52 respondents. Only 7% said they use them most frequently. Parenting Education is a newsletter produced in Edina with lesson plans and reproducible handouts. It was listed by 24 educators.

Professional journals were listed by 25 educators. Six of those 25 use them most frequently. These professional journal names were provided: *Young Children*, the *Journal for the National Association for the Education of Young Children* (NAEYC) was listed by five educators. *Zero to Three* and the *Journal of Marriage and Family* were also named.

The Internet as a resource has already been used by some parent educators. Twenty-four people listed the Internet as a source but no one said they use it most frequently. Though they were included on some of the surveys, 20 respondents or less listed one of the following sources: other parent educators, audio/video tapes, school or personal files, newspapers and workshops/seminars/speakers.

Computer Use at Home and at Work

Of the 101 people who responded to having a computer at home, 11 indicated they never use it. There are more computers in the homes (91%) of parent educators than there are in their schools (76%). Only 10 (9%) of the respondents did not have a computer at home while 27 (24%) do not have access to a computer at work.

Computer use. The low category of use on the survey (2 to 3 hours) was reported by 55 respondents (49%) for computer use at home. There are 34 using the computer moderately (4 to 8 hours) and 13 who are using their home computer more

than 8 hours a week. Computer use reflects all use at home. This may or may not reflect parent education related work. One respondent using the computer more than 8 hours a week is a program coordinator, another is a private family education consultant that uses the computer more for consulting than parent education, and one is an Assistant Professor of Nursing using the computer at home.

The percentage of computers available to use at work is lower than in the home, so it is reasonable to predict that computer use at work is even lower than at home. Some surveys indicated that sharing computers at work may influence lower usage than if they had their own computer. There were 42 educators disclosing that they never use a computer at work. Low use (2 to 3 hours) was marked by 49 people with a total of 91 using a computer at work for less than 4 hours a week (see Figure 6).

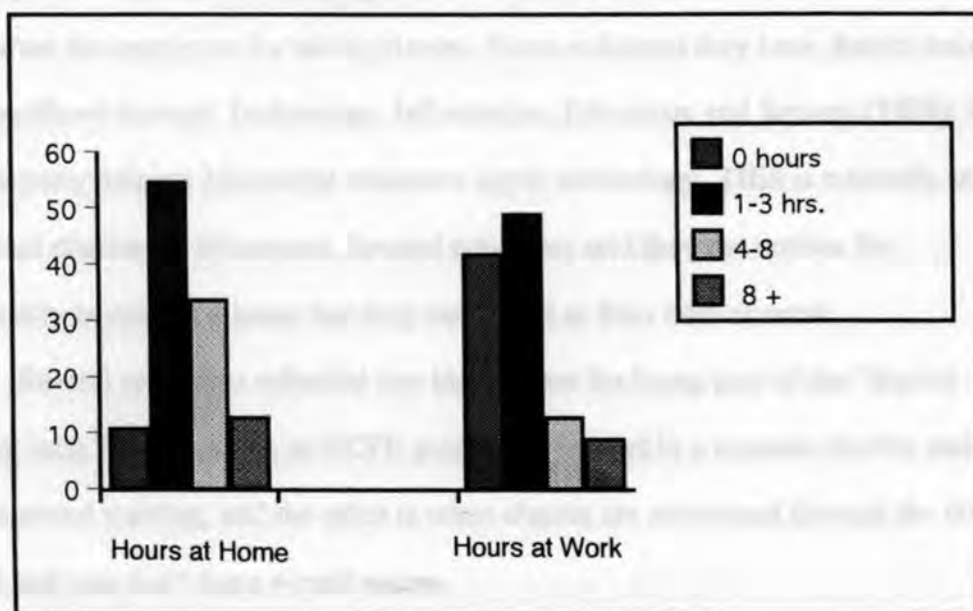


Figure 6

Average Amount of Computer Use Per Week

Learning How to Use Computers

When learning how to use a computer, approximately one third have made it a family affair. Thirty-five of them said they learned to use their computer from their children and 30 said their spouses have helped them. Additional knowledge was learned in classes (sometimes through community education), from friends, colleagues, the library, in college and three said they “actually read the manual.” While 30 said they learned a little bit at work, the overwhelming response to the question (58 surveys) was “through trial and error, I taught myself.”

The 30 participants that have had training through their employer supplied the researcher with examples of the training. While there were some opportunities, there was a wide range including one class 3 years ago, e-mail training, ongoing in service opportunities, and one-on-one time with a staff tech person. One school district reimburses the employee for taking classes. Some indicated they have district training classes offered through Technology, Information, Education and Society (TIES). TIES is a company helping Minnesota educators apply technology. TIES is currently serving 39 school districts in Minnesota. Several educators said they get notices for community education classes that they can attend at their own expense.

Several responses reflected two big barriers for being part of the “district training loop.” One is when an ECFE program is housed in a separate facility and you cannot attend training, and the other is when classes are advertised through the district e-mail and you don’t have e-mail access.

Even though training is not always being utilized (because it is offered at another site, during their hours of teaching or on workshop days), it is being provided by some districts. This is not the case for 49 respondents. They indicated there has been no training provided at all. One person wrote “You mean some districts do?”

If training were offered, the researcher wanted to know how many parent educators would consider using the Internet as a resource and why (or why not). An amazing 89 responded with "Yes" or "I already do." There were three "Maybe" write-ins and four answered "No." Seventeen did not indicate a yes or no response.

Of those that answered no, one person wrote she had no access to be connected to the Internet. Another said that it was too time consuming to get to where she wanted to go and would probably not use it in the future. She does not have time at school and does not have access at home. Another said that the sites she has been to are only as good as the provider. The information they had was usually surface stuff, fad like and not researched. The last no respondent wrote, "Training is not the problem. I can access the Internet at home. I'm not motivated due to lack of time. Graduate school and full time work is all I can handle."

One respondent who indicated she might said she probably would if the information were research based and she knew the reputation of the source. Another "maybe" has tried in the past and found that it took a lot longer than it was worth.

Why do professional educators want to learn more about the Internet? The responses highlighted the access to new information. Several surveys reported that the Internet was an efficient and thorough resource of information and statistics. "It keeps me current on the latest research and it helps me be more selective about what is reliable to share with parents. Many reported they are looking for up to date information that is easy to use and that there are valuable sites for teachers as well as parents. The ease of accessibility was often mentioned, "I can do it from home on my time, when it's convenient for me." One educator wrote, "I already use it but I might use it more with additional training."

Even if training were offered, there are still some barriers for some educators. Several surveys said that computers are not readily accessible at work. They share a computer with several other people or they have to go to the media center or computer lab in order to use a computer. Two people commented on the same problem; the computer at home is different from the one at work. "I have a Macintosh at work and an IBM at home" (or vice versa).

Internet Availability at Home and at Work

There were 82 respondents (73%) who acknowledged they already have Internet access at home. They may have competition to get on "the Net" from other family members though. One survey said, "I want it at school because I have to share it with my teenager at home." There were 74 educators who said they have Internet access through work. Approximately 28 did not have Internet access at work and nine did not know whether their district had access or not.

Questions Parents Have Had About the Internet

Parents have been asking for Internet addresses (for themselves and for their children), ideas to do with kids, and sites for kids. They wanted to know whether the information is reliable or not. They have asked how to keep their kids safe while surfing. Many said parents have brought in information they have found and shared it with each other. Specific medical conditions have been asked about, for example; Attention Deficit Disorder and Autism. They want medical information as well as parent support. When asked about parents, one educator said, "Modern day infant moms either keep up daily (with the Internet) or they don't touch it. They tell me the latest information or controversy."

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Internet

At this point the questionnaire gave the participant the option to stop or continue if they use the Internet as a resource for parent education. There were seven more questions for the 60 who chose to continue.

Many of the advantages listed were similar for their reasons why they wanted more training. The five strongest reasons or advantages for using the Internet for parent education were:

1. Up to date, current information
2. Multiple areas to draw from/search for information
3. Wide range or variety of topics
4. Convenience; easy access anytime of the day or night
5. Find information not readily available elsewhere

At least 30 respondents listed "current, up to date information" as an advantage. Survey respondents also expressed they can get general information or very specific answers depending on their needs. They have access to experts (e.g., Dr. Sears and Dr. Brazelton) and they can find out what other parents are asking the experts. They can also read how the experts answer questions. Some parent educators like the access to handouts for parents. They can also get the latest consumer product information and recalls. It can be good for parents who are homebound by health or lack of transportation.

One educator commented on the diverse opinions and different points of view. "It's nice to see a fresh viewpoint." One benefit listed on a survey was "to get new ideas for old topics." Another expressed her use of e-mail. She said past students send her new ideas and websites.

This list of disadvantages was almost as long as the advantages. The number one cited downfall noted by over 20 respondents was the amount of information that is not professional, research based or accurate. "If you can't tell where the source of information is from (e.g., author), is it valid, does it have integrity?" Many expressed the concern about opinions vs. facts. With all that "information" to sift through to get to the good stuff, the next disadvantage was how time consuming a search can be. It takes time to search, time to load, time to download, and time to link between sites to get more information. "Too much time spent to show for the effort." Downloading a virus was mentioned as a concern too. One respondent who answered yes to consider using the Internet as a resource uses a computer at work more than 8 hours a week but does not have a computer at home. She wrote on her survey, "To assume that the world has internet access is elitist and inappropriate for parent ed." Even with the disadvantages, many continue to use it. One response read, "I just love it!"

Sources of Internet information

One of the most frequently listed Internet sites was Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). ERIC is a national information system to access education-related literature. One ERIC site is a National Parent Information Network. It can be accessed through <http://www.npin.org>. Another frequently listed site was also from ERIC. The site is the Elementary and Early Childhood Education clearinghouse. It can be found at <http://ericeece.org>. The site from the Extension Services at the University of Minnesota was also listed quite often. The site has many resources and many links to other helpful sites. It can be accessed by going to http://www.extension.umn.edu/specializations/familydevelopment/fd_links.html. The next site is produced by the Children, Youth and Family Consortium at the University

of Minnesota. It is provided to be a resource for children and families on the Web. It can be accessed through <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/cyfclinks.html>. This site has many links to parenting resources and information. Another popular site was also listed as a resource in its own category, Family Information Services. FIS was the third most frequently used resource following books and magazines. FIS is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is intended to be a preventive, education resource for building strong, healthy families. Its address is <http://www.familyinfoserv.com>.

Evaluative Criteria

The parent educators who responded to this question were very concerned about the credibility of the information they obtain. The information quality was commented on at a much higher frequency than the technical quality of a site. They asked many questions such as Who is the author (Dr., psychologist, educator)? Is the source based on fact or opinion? If it is a university study based on research, is it consistent with other research? They want information that is developmentally appropriate and takes into account for individual differences in children and parents. Does it 'fit' with other information they have? They look for hidden agendas that are trying to sell a theory or product. They want it to be relevant to the parents in their group. Can it be used as a handout (printed attractively)? Educators want it to lead to good discussion. Is it common sense, parent friendly, and not too technical? Does it pass my knowledge base/years of experience test? Does it "fit" in my belief system? Are the links from reliable sites? Where did I get the address? Does the site have any ratings or awards? Is the information consistent with school district policy? Is it reliable, reasonable, respectful and research-based?

Problems Encountered with the Internet

The amount of time it takes to do a search was listed under disadvantages. It was also listed for this question. At least 12 respondents listed the time factor, either being too slow or time consuming. "Losing my connection" was also mentioned by several participants. They get disconnected and need to dial back in. One problem for one person was accessing undesirable sites by accident (e.g. pornography). Another problem is, "once you get into a 'link loop', it's hard to get out and then you don't know where to go next." Several educators mentioned being teased with information and then not getting what they thought or hoped for. When there are several people sharing a computer, either at work or at home, bookmarks disappear making it hard to return to a good site. The last big problem listed on the surveys is related to the first problem. Everything is so SLOW that it takes more time to do a search.

Summary

The surveys that were returned yielded a wealth of information. We know these parent educators are very educated and many are licensed in other areas besides parent education. Their family gross income is an average of \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year reflecting a middle-upper middle class group. They work an average of 26 hours a week and have an average of 10 years of experience in parent education.

Parent educators use a wide variety of resources to prepare for their classes. They have computers at home and at work and according to the time chart, they are used at home more than at work. They have had very little training to use the Internet and 78% would like more training to use the Internet as a resource for parent education.

Just like any other resources, the Internet has some advantages and disadvantages. The parent educators use a variety of criteria to evaluate the information they obtain from the Internet. They want to know if the author is credible, if the information is accurate, if it is based on current research, if it is easy to understand and useful with parent groups.

Several educators included Internet addresses with their surveys. They were compiled by the researcher in Appendix E to be used as a resource for anyone that could benefit from them.

Review of Results and Their Meaning and Implications for Parent Education

The population in this study may have been an elite group. Suburban responses totaled 46% of the total number of surveys returned. The demographics showed the majority worked part time with 64 (61%) educators working 11 to 34 hours and 32 (29%) working 35 or more hours a week. Their education levels showed they were very educated and have taken additional credits beyond a bachelors degree. There were over 1,100 years of combined experience in parent education. They indicated a strong value of marriage when 101 or 93% selected married for their marital status. These parent educators have also taken "parenting to heart" because 109 or 97 % have children. They have experience 35 parents. Their age range reflects a maturing span with 90% between the ages of 31 to 60 and 46% between 41- to 50-years-old. Their average family income of \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year reflects a middle-upper middle class income consistent with Littlefield (1996).

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Discussion in this chapter includes a review of the study results as well as implications for parent education. Future research and future practice for parent education will also be discussed.

Review of Results and Their Meaning and Implications for Parent Education

The population in this study may have been an elite group. Suburban responses totaled 46% of the total number of surveys returned. The demographics showed the majority worked part time with 68 (61%) educators working 11 to 34 hours and 32 (29%) working 35 or more hours a week. Their education levels showed they were very educated and have taken additional credits beyond a bachelors degree. There were over 1,100 years of combined experience in parent education. They indicated a strong value of marriage when 101 or 93% selected married for their marital status. These parent educators have also taken "parenting to heart" because 109 or 97 % have children. They have experience as parents. Their age range reflects a maturing span with 90% between the ages of 31 to 60 and 46% between 41- to 50-years-old. Their average family income of \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year reflects a middle-upper middle class income consistent with Littlefield (1996).

The majority of the parent educators surveyed (79%) indicated a strong desire for additional training for computer and Internet use. Eighty-nine respondents indicated they would consider the use of the Internet as a resource for parent education if they knew how to do it and where to access information. In the study, 91% of the parent educators have computers at home and 76% have computer access at work. Of those with computers, 73% are connected to the Internet at home and 73% are connected at work. The responses reflected a lack of district training (44 surveys reported no training has been offered) or the problems with attending classes. Often classes are offered off site, after school hours or during teacher workshop days. At least 20 surveys indicated that using a computer at school is often inconvenient. Many parent educators share a computer with other educators or with a secretary. Others have to go to school media centers or computer labs to use a computer. The need for district training is also supported by the number of educators (58 or 51%) that have taught themselves to use a computer and have learned through trial and error.

Parent educators indicated many different kinds of criteria to evaluate sites and content. They looked at the technical aspects including the time it takes to access a site, ability to link to other relevant sites, and the ease to get around within the site. They reported that some sites are hard to navigate through, have little applicable information, and had too much advertising. The possibility of downloading a virus was a concern for one respondent and accessing undesirable sites (pornography) was a problem for another.

The quality of information was evaluated routinely by parent educators who use the Internet. The number one reported criterion was the credibility of the source. The parent educators wanted to know if the information was reliable, reputable, respectful, and possibly research based. At least 44 (of the 60 surveys that indicated

they use the Internet) reported that they looked at the authors' credentials when determining the quality of the information. They wanted the information to be current and updated on a regular basis. They wanted it to "pass their knowledge base or years of experience test." Sixteen educators listed the reliability of information as a disadvantage. They listed: inaccurate, not professional, misinformation, and opinions as reasons for not using information they found on the Internet. It is this researcher's belief that the parent educators from this study who are using the Internet are discriminating the information they find on the Internet.

There are many time issues for parent educators. Time to find resources, time to prepare materials, and the time to balance work and family. The time to access information of the Internet can be very slow and this was frequently listed as a disadvantage. Time for training was also mentioned. "Even if I had training, I still wouldn't have time to go on the Net," said one respondent. Many others said they liked the option of using the Internet when they had time, at their own convenience.

The wide range of computer use may indicate a wide range of computer skills and abilities between the survey participants. Training would have to be offered at various levels to meet the needs of the educators. Some have had no training and several respondents reported they use computers regularly so they would have more computer skills and sophistication.

The use of the Internet may be beneficial for parent educators to learn about new materials or resources for parent education. Accessing www.amazon.com or www.barnesandnoble.com may help to identify new parenting books that are on the market or www.familyinfoserve.com may highlight a new class that is being offered in parent or child development. At www.hennepin.lib.mn.us or www.ericps.ed.uiuc.edu parent educators can get hundreds of titles of parenting books or journal articles.

Within minutes they can access printed materials that may have taken weeks to request and have mailed to them prior to the Internet.

Limitations of Research

Documentation of positive impact of the use of the Internet for parent education has not been researched. This study is a beginning to inquire about Internet use and the attitudes of parent educators and the Internet's possible benefit to them. Experienced staff in established suburban programs may have been more motivated to participate in this study.

Future Research

Future research could include the study of support to parents from the Internet. Is it the same or different from the personal contact with parents that is found in ECFE programs? Will electronic media (including the Internet) replace ECFE as the expert for parents who are too busy to attend classes?

Implications for Future Practice

Information technology has become a significant part of our lives. Televisions, telephones, VCR's, cable television, cellular phones, computers, and now the Internet. David Walsh, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute on Media and the Family in Minnesota once told the researcher, "This is the first generation of children who have a knowledge base of technology greater than the parent generation. The parents are wowed but the kids take it for granted because they have grown up with it surrounding them" (D. Walsh, personal communication, July 6, 1999). Traditionally, elders had a knowledge and skill base to pass on as mentors to the younger generations. Now we have parent educators being taught to use computers by their children (this researcher

included). Less than 10 years ago, www.com would have meant nothing. Now a 9-year-old can go to www.australia.com and access photographs of the Great Barrier Reef or crocodiles in Kakadu National Park.

The literature indicated that the Internet is being used by students and educators as a resource for learning and teaching. While it is growing world wide, not everyone has access to it yet. Several ECFE programs in Minnesota do not have the capacity to be connected yet. "Soon though" said one response. There were 7 rural, 8 suburban, and 10 urban respondents that did not have Internet access. Possibly the district has access but not the parent educator from their teaching locations.

The Internet is not regulated and any one can put anything on it. This has caused a lot of concern for parent educators who try to evaluate the information they obtain on the Internet. When parents use the Internet, they may not have been educated about the dangers of believing everything they read. Quoting "It was on the Web" as their only source and authority could be dangerous. Parent educators could be doing them a service if they taught them to "sift" through all media information including but not limited to the Internet and be selective about what is the best information to believe or use for their families. Unless parent educators themselves are discriminating the information, they cannot educate parents how to do this.

Parent education under the ECFE model is based on personal contact, relationships and face to face interaction. Parent education by its nature is process oriented. It is also about support and education. Parent educators typically build rapport and share discussions with parents. The art of communication is limited with a computer. A parent educator wrote, "Parents with toddlers do not have time to eat, sleep or use the bathroom let alone use the Internet. They are coming to classes for the

sense of community and sharing ideas. The Internet might provide new ideas but the human contact and support factor is paramount in ECFE.”

ECFE should explore the best uses of technology and continue to do what it does best, help parents be the best parents they can be for their children. That could mean they put out their own websites with parenting information. That could mean they teach parents to be critical evaluators just as they would be with any printed information. That could mean parent educators get the training they need and the time they need to use the Internet as the valuable resource it could be. According to Reed (1995), the best way to get a sense of what the Internet is about is to start exploring. Parent educators may also need to assert themselves within their own districts to get the equipment they need to access the Internet.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to survey parent educators about resources and computer use. The value of collaboration with other parent educators was indicated by the high response of surveys and the listing of each other as one of the best resources for parent educators. Answers about computer use at home and at work were an indication of an established “people oriented” body of educators utilizing new technology to enhance their knowledge base and to supplement their current curriculum preparation methods. Parents are looking to parent educators for help and support with technology. Unless parent educators get up to speed, another generation will come along more advanced than the last one and question whether or not the parent educator is still credible as an educator. ECFE parent educators could help parents navigate through the information, but first they may need a few maiden voyages of their own to learn the fastest and safest route to take. Once they get the

map drawn, parent educators can empower parents to be knowledgeable consumers and advocates for their children on the Internet as they always have. Appendix E lists over 80 Internet sites, many were listed by survey respondents. While this researcher has been to many of the sites and professionally uses several, this researcher cannot endorse all the sites. Individuals should implement their own evaluative criteria when accessing any Internet sites. It is this researcher's belief that ECFE will not be replaced by the Internet for the majority of the families seeking support and family education. Will it for some busy parents? It may. It may not. ECFE strengthens families through encouragement and personal interactions. Even in realistic virtual experiences such as chat rooms for parents, you cannot beat the personal touch of ECFE.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
APPENDIXES

Letter to Program Coordinator

Dear ECPE Coordinator,

Welcome to another school year of Family Education. Fall is a very busy time of year getting new classes started and getting everything organized. Now that things may have settled down a bit, I am writing to ask for your assistance. My name is Randie Lach and I am a graduate student working on a Master's degree in Family Studies at St. Cloud State University. My study is about parent educators and the use of computers and the Internet for parent education. You will find an attached survey requesting information from parent educators on your staff.

I received a list of ECPE addresses from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning for the mailing of this study. I do not know how many parent educators you have on staff. As a coordinator, your support in getting this survey to your staff is helpful and important to me as a graduate student. Please assist me in photocopying my attached survey for all the parent educators on your staff and distribute them as soon as possible at your staff meetings.

The results from this study may be beneficial to your program through the listing of Internet sites for parent education and learning the resources used by other parent education programs. I will send you a summary of this study when it is completed. I have enclosed a Self-Addressed Envelope (larger district than one envelope) for your convenience in mailing the surveys back to me for paying the return postage. Please consider it an investment in research that you will benefit from later.

APPENDIX A

Please contact me or Dr. Letter to Program Coordinator at St. Cloud State University (612) 255-2132 if you have any questions. If you choose not to participate, your decision will not affect your relationship with your school district or with St. Cloud State University.

Thank you again for your help with this project.

Randie Lach
3928 Abbott Ave. No.
Robbinsdale, MN 55422
(612) 537-7596
Randie_Lach@Wayzata.k12.mn.us

Dear ECFE Coordinators,

Welcome to another school year of Family Education. Fall is a very busy time of year getting new classes started and getting everything organized. Now that things may have settled down a bit, I am writing to ask for your assistance. My name is Renée Lach and I am a graduate student working on a Master's degree in Family Studies at St. Cloud State University. My study is about parent educators and the use of computers and the Internet for parent education. You will find an attached survey requesting information from parent educators on your staff.

I received a list of ECFE addresses from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning for the mailing of this study. I do not know how many parent educators you have on staff. As a coordinator, your support in getting this survey to your staff is helpful and important to me as a graduate student. Please assist me in photocopying my attached survey for all the parent educators on your staff and distribute them as soon as possible at your staff meetings.

The results from this study may be beneficial to your program through the listing of Internet sites for parent education and learning the resources used by other parent education programs. I will send you a summary of this study when it is completed. I have enclosed a Self Addressed Envelope (larger districts may receive more than one envelope) for your convenience in mailing the surveys back to me. Thank you for paying the return postage. Please consider it an investment in research that you will benefit from later.

Please contact me or Dr. Glen Palm, my advisor at St. Cloud State University (612) 255-2132 if you have any questions. If you decide not to participate, your decision will not affect your relationship with your school district or with St. Cloud State University.

Thank you again for your help with this project.

Renée Lach
3938 Abbott Ave. No.
Robbinsdale, MN. 55422
(612) 537 - 7596
Renee_Lach@Wayzata.k12.mn.us

Dear Colleagues in Family Education,

Hello. My name is Renée Lach and I am a Children's Teacher and Parent Educator in the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program in the Weyzata School District. You are invited to participate in a study of parent educators and the use of computers and the Internet for parent education for my Master's degree in Family Studies at St. Cloud State University.

Parent educators across Minnesota will be surveyed for this study. This study will benefit the parent education field by compiling Internet sites and other resources. Thank you for your participation. Your support and assistance is both helpful and important to me as a graduate student.

Names and addresses will be separated from the information you provide. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and be disclosed only with your permission.

To thank you for participating and returning the questionnaire, I will enter your name in a drawing for a gift certificate to Barnes and Noble bookstore. You will also have the choice of receiving a list of all the Internet addresses that I compile at the end of this project and survey results.

APPENDIX B

If you decide to participate, please complete the following questionnaire by October 20th, 1999 (before MPA) and return it in the enclosed Self-Addressed Envelope.

Letter to Parent Educator

Your returning the questionnaire indicates that you have read this information and have decided to participate in this study. Please contact me or Dr. Glen Palm, my advisor at St. Cloud State University (812) 255-2132 if you have any questions. If you decide not to participate, your decision will not affect your relationship with your school district or with St. Cloud State University.

Thank you again for your help with this project.

Renée Lach
3916 Abbott Ave. No.
Robbinsdale, MN. 55422
(612) 537-7596
Renée_Lach@Weyzata.k12.mn.us

Dear Colleagues in Family Education,

Hello. My name is Renée Lach and I am a Children's Teacher and Parent Educator in the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program in the Wayzata School District. You are invited to participate in a study of parent educators and the use of computers and the Internet for parent education for my Master's degree in Family Studies at St. Cloud State University.

Parent educators across Minnesota will be surveyed for this study. This study will benefit the parent education field by compiling Internet sites and other resources. Thank you for your participation. Your support and assistance is both helpful and important to me as a graduate student.

Names and addresses will be separated from the information you provide. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and be disclosed only with your permission.

To thank you for participating and returning the questionnaire, I will enter your name in a drawing for a gift certificate to Barnes and Noble bookstore. You will also have the choice of receiving a list of all the Internet addresses that I compile at the end of this project and survey results.

If you decide to participate, please complete the following questionnaire by October 20th, 1999 (before MEA) and return it in the enclosed Self Addressed Envelope.

Your returning the questionnaire indicates that you have read this information and have decided to participate in this study. Please contact me or Dr. Glen Palm, my advisor at St. Cloud State University (612) 255-2132 if you have any questions. If you decide not to participate, your decision will not affect your relationship with your school district or with St. Cloud State University.

Thank you again for your help with this project.

Renée Lach
3938 Abbott Ave. No.
Robbinsdale, MN. 55422
(612) 537 - 7596
Renee_Lach@Wayzata.k12.mn.us

Demographics

1) Current Position _____

2) Location of District: City _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____

3) Licensed to what areas _____

4) Years in Parent Education _____

5) Number of hours worked in a typical week _____

6) Age Circle one: 20-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 60 years _____

7) Marital status Circle one: Single _____ Married/Divorced _____ Widowed _____

8) Education Level Circle one: Bachelor _____ Bachelor + 15 _____
 Bachelor + 30 _____ Master's Degree _____ Additional Advanced degree _____

9) Family Gross Income—1998 Circle one: \$10,000-\$29,000 _____ \$20,000-\$39,000 _____
 \$30,000-\$49,000 _____ \$40,000-\$59,000 _____ \$50,000-\$69,000 _____
 \$60,000-\$79,000 _____ \$70,000 + _____

Are you a parent? _____ Ages of children _____

APPENDIX C

As a parent educator, what are the best resources you use for your classes? Please be as specific as possible. Examples: books, F.L.S., journals, magazines, newsletters, printed curriculum.

Parent Education Resource Questionnaire

What do you use most frequently?

Do you have a computer at home? _____

Do you have a computer at work? _____

If you have a computer, how have you learned to use it? At work? From your kids?

Demographics

- 1) Current Position _____
- 2) Location of District City _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____
- 3) Licensed in what areas _____
- 4) Years in Parent Education _____
- 5) Number of hours worked in a typical week _____
- 6) Age Circle one 20—30 31—40 41—50 51—60 60 years
- 7) Marital status Circle one: Single Married/Divorced Widowed
- 8) Education Level Circle one Bachelor Bachelor + 15
Bachelor +30 Master's Degree Additional Advanced degree
- 9) Family Gross Income—1998 Circle one: \$10,000–\$20,000 \$20,000–\$30,000
\$30,000–\$40,000 \$40,000–\$50,000 \$50,000–\$60,000
\$60,000–\$70,000 \$70,000 +
- Are you a parent? ___ Ages of children _____

As a parent educator, what are the best resources you use for your classes? Please be as specific as possible. Examples: books, F.I.S., journals, magazines, newsletters, printed curriculums:

What do you use most frequently?

Do you have a computer at home? _____

Do you have a computer at work? _____

If you have a computer, how have you learned to use it? At work? From your kids?

How often in a typical week do you use a computer?

At work:	Low	2 -3 hours
	Moderate	4- 8 hours
	Frequently	8 or more hours
At home:	Low	2 -3 hours
	Moderate	4- 8 hours
	Frequently	8 or more hours

Combined total hours of computer use in a typical week: _____

In what ways has your employer provided training opportunities to use the Internet?

If training were provided, would you consider using the Internet as a resource for parent information? YES NO Why or why not?

Do you have access to the Internet at school? YES NO

Comments _____

Do you have access to the Internet at home? YES NO

Comments _____

What kinds of questions have parents in your classes had about using the Internet as a resource for parenting information?

*****YOU MAY STOP HERE IF YOU DO NOT USE THE INTERNET*****

What are some of the advantages of using the Internet for parent education?

What are some of the disadvantages? *(as perceived by parents)*

If you have used the Internet, where have you accessed information for Parent Education?

The following questions will be repeated and coded for confidentiality.

If I have additional questions, may I call you? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Name

Please Number

Best Time to Call

OPTIONAL: Complete only if you want additional information to be mailed to you.

Address

What are some problems you have encountered using the Internet (example: web sites changing)

Please check the following boxes if you would like to receive more information about the survey

☐ A copy of the Internet address provided from this survey

☐ A survey summary

Please list some of the sites you use on the Internet.

Which of these would you recommend as resources to parents?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

The following questions will be separated and coded for confidentiality.

If I have additional questions, may I call you? YES NO

Name

Phone Number

Best Time to Call

E-mail Address

OPTIONAL Complete only if you want additional information to be mailed to you.

Address:

Please check the following boxes if you would like to receive more information about this survey.

- ☐ A list of the Internet addresses generated from this survey.
☐ A survey summary.

Becoming the Parent You Want to Be
 Emotional Life of a Toddler: The
 Growing a Child
 Heart of Parenting: The
 Help: The Kids Are All in Again
 How to Get Your Child to Eat, But Not Too Much
 How to Get the Child Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
 Incomplete Parents: The
 Kids Are Worth It
 Know Your Child
 Love and Limits
 Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus
 Parents are Humans
 Positive Discipline for Preschoolers
 Quarantined Children At
 Raising Good Kids
 Real Boys
 Setting Limits
 Siblings Without Rivalry
 Ten Grievous Sins
 Touchpoints
 Understanding Your Child's Temperament
 Well-Covered Child: The
 What to Expect: The First Year
 What to Expect: The Toddler Years
 What to Expect: When You're Expecting
 Why Parents Disagree and What You Can Do About It
 Without Spoiling or Spoiling
 Toddlers
 Year 1 Year Old
 Year 2 Year Old
 Year 3 Year Old
 Year 4 Year Old
 Year 5 Year Old
 Year 6 Year Old
 Your Special Child

APPENDIX D

Book Titles

Becoming the Parent You Want to Be
Emotional Life of a Toddler, The
Growing a Girl
Heart of Parenting, The
Help, The Kids Are At It Again
How to Get Your Child to Eat, But Not Too Much
How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
Intentional Family, The
Kids Are Worth It
Know Your Child
Love and Limits
Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus
Parents are Forever
Positive Discipline for Preschoolers
Questions Children Ask
Raising Good Kids
Real Boys
Setting Limits
Siblings Without Rivalry
Ten Greatest Gifts
Touchpoints
Understanding Your Child's Temperament
Well Centered Child, The
What to Expect: The First Year
What to Expect: The Toddler Years
What to Expect: When You're Expecting
Why Parents Disagree and What You Can Do About It
Without Spanking or Spoiling
Yardsticks
Your 1 Year Old
Your 2 Year Old
Your 3 Year Old
Your 4 Year Old
Your 5 Year Old
Your 6 Year Old
Your Spirited Child

<http://houston.ags.tdel.edu/strength/parenting>
<http://cfl.state.nm.us> (Children, Families and Learning)
<http://cfl.state.nm.us/cfl> (CFL Early Childhood Family Initiatives)
<http://ericasec.org> (ERIC)
<http://nccic.org> (National Child Care Information Center)
<http://nccncc.com>
<http://npen.org> (National Parenting Education Network)
<http://outreach.wiscourt.edu/newfront/families>
<http://teacher.scholastic.com>
<http://www.aap.org> (American Academy of Pediatrics)
<http://www.abcpending.com>
<http://www.ag.chi-sports.edu>
<http://www.amanda.com>

APPENDIX E

Internet Addresses Listed by Survey Respondents

<http://www.babycenter.com>
<http://www.brightstart.org>
<http://www.clickandcup.com>
<http://www.childbirth.org>
<http://www.cpsc.gov> (consumer product safety)
<http://www.cw.org/ed> (Science Street)
<http://www.cyberman.com>
<http://www.cylc.unn.edu>
<http://www.cylc.unn.edu/cylclinks.html>
<http://www.cylc.unn.edu/cylc>
<http://www.earlychildhood.com>
<http://www.ed.gov/search>
<http://www.educast.com>
<http://www.esnet.iastate.edu>
<http://www.extension.unn.edu>

<http://bluehen.ags.udel.edu/strength/parenting>
<http://cfl.state.mn.us> (Children, Families and Learning)
<http://cfl.state.mn.us/ecfi> (CFL Early Childhood Family Initiatives)
<http://ericee.org> (ERIC)
<http://nccic.org> (National Child Care Information Center)
<http://netmom.com>
<http://npen.crc.uiuc.edu/> (National Parenting Education Network)
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/newfront/families>
<http://teacher.scholastic.com>
<http://www.aap.org> (American Academy of Pediatrics)
<http://www.abcparenting.com>
<http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu>
<http://www.amazon.com>
<http://www.babycenter.com>
<http://www.brightfutures.org>
<http://www.chickensoup.com>
<http://www.childbirth.org>
<http://www.cpsc.gov> (consumer product safety)
<http://www.ctw.org/aol> (Sesame Street)
<http://www.cybermom.com>
<http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>
<http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/cyfclinks.html>
<http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu>
<http://www.earlychildhood.com>
<http://www.ed.gov/search>
<http://www.educast.com>
<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu>
<http://www.extension.umn.edu>

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/family>
http://www.extension.umn.edu/specializations/familydevelopment/fd_links.html
<http://www.familiesandwork.com>
<http://www.family.go.com>
<http://www.familyeducation.com/home>
<http://www.familyfoodzone.com>
<http://www.familyinfoserv.com>
<http://www.familyinternet.com/dad>
<http://www.familyplay.com>
<http://www.familyweb.com>
<http://www.fathering.org>
<http://www.fathers.com>
<http://www.fathersworld.com/features.html>
<http://www.futureofchildren.org>
<http://www.iamyourchild.org>
<http://www.idealists.org>
<http://www.ivillage.com>
<http://www.kidshealth.org>
<http://www.kidsource.com>
<http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent>
<http://www.lifesmarts.org>
<http://www.mayohealth.org>
<http://www.mediafamily.com>
<http://www.minnesotamom.com>
<http://www.mnparent.com>
<http://www.momsonline.com>
<http://www.naeyc.org>
<http://www.ncfr.com>
<http://www.netparents.org>
<http://www.nncc.org>

<http://www.nnh.org>
<http://www.npin.org>
<http://www.pacer.org>
<http://www.pampers.com>
<http://www.parent.net>
<http://www.parenthoodweb.com>
<http://www.parenting-qa.com>
<http://www.parenting.umn.edu>
<http://www.parentsmagazine.com>
<http://www.parentsoup.com>
<http://www.parentspace.com>
<http://www.parentstalk.com>
<http://www.parenttime.com>
<http://www.parentzone.com>
<http://www.pbs.org>
<http://www.positiveparenting.com>
<http://www.problemsolver.org>
<http://www.rmtf.org>
<http://www.scholastic.com>
<http://www.search-institute.org>
<http://www.slowlane.com>
<http://www.smartparent.com>
<http://www.startribune.com>
<http://www.teachfree.com>
<http://www.theparentclub.com>
<http://www.tnpc.com>
<http://www.wcco.com>
<http://www.zerotothree.org>