

Supporting Children and Families Through Parenting Education: Findings from the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC)

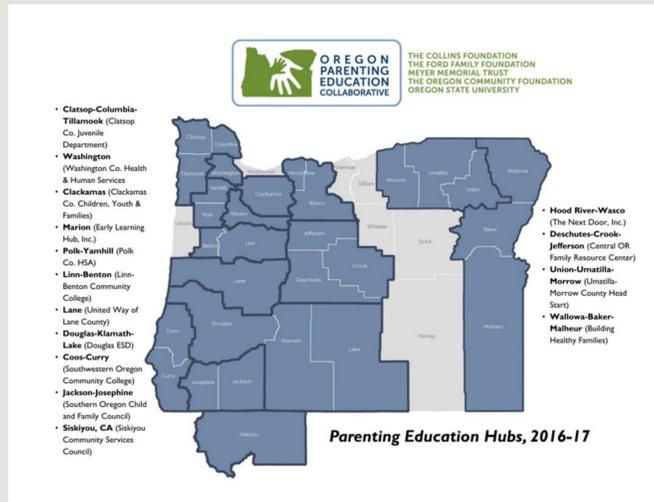
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Parenting Education

A wealth of research shows that sensitive and responsive caregiving is critical for children's healthy development (e.g., Bowman, Pratt, Rennekamp, & Sektnan, 2010; Lurie-Hurvitz, 2009). Parenting relates to short and long-term social and academic outcomes for children and research shows significant gaps exist in these skills as early as preschool entry (e.g., Barnett & Lamy, 2013). Parenting is learned and high numbers of parents report that they are seeking strategies to support their children (Zero to Three, 2016). Parenting education opportunities, however, have been limited in terms of funding and accessibility.

Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC)

The Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC) is an initiative to increase awareness of and universal access to evidence-based parenting education programs to families with young children (prenatal to age six). OPEC is a partnership between Oregon State University and four of Oregon's largest foundations (The Oregon Community Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, and The Collins Foundation). With support from OPEC, 15 Parenting Education Hubs have been established, supporting parenting education efforts in 29 counties in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. In addition to funding, OPEC supports grantees through evaluation, technical assistance, and professional development led by Oregon State University.



OPEC Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of OPEC is to support delivery of high quality parenting education programs and to support collaborative efforts to strengthen regional parenting education systems through coordination and planning.

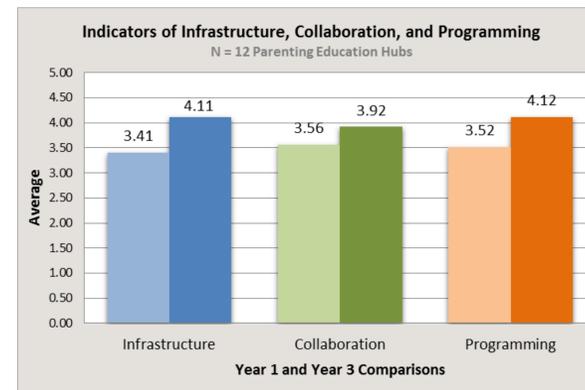
Vision

All Oregon parents will have access to high quality, proven parenting education programs that support them in their critical role as their children's first and most important teachers; all Oregon communities will be served by a network of strong parenting programs and a regional parenting education "Hub;" and Oregon will be a national leader in professionalizing and normalizing parenting education.



Research

Evaluation of OPEC is conducted using ongoing cluster evaluation. The cluster evaluation involves multiple methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and research analysis. Over the first six years of the initiative (2010-2016), data was collected from over 18,290 parents following participation in family workshops and parenting education series. In addition, 430 community partners have been surveyed and over 500 contacts were made with site coordinators through site visits, phone interviews, and surveys.



Evaluation and Results

Results indicate that OPEC has significantly expanded the number of parenting education opportunities in counties with OPEC sites. Through OPEC Hubs and Programming grants, 17,984 parents have participated in 20,167 classes as part of 1,950 multi-week parenting series. In addition, 6,270 families have been reached through home visits, and 429,335 families have participated in a total of 17,252 family programs. Families report significant improvement in parenting knowledge, skills, and behaviors as well as significant improvement in their child's behavior after participating in parenting education class series.

OPEC Hubs have expanded the capacity of communities to provide parenting education to families through improved organization infrastructure, increased community capacity, and implementation of best practices parenting education programming. Sites have also trained 974 facilitators across communities, leveraged \$19.5 million in new funds and in-kind support, and created partnerships with the Department of Human Services, Community Care Organizations, faith-based programs, and schools.

Discussion and Conclusions

Over the past six years, OPEC has had a significant impact on the field of parenting education in Oregon. Few states outside of Oregon have systematic efforts in place to support children and families through evidence-based parenting education programs, positioning Oregon to serve as a national model for scaling parenting education.

References

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