



## School Based Parenting Education Programs in Orange County CCE

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Orange County has been fostering stronger family bonds and nurturing children's well-being through a collaborative effort between Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Orange and most of the 17 school districts in Orange County. This partnership has brought about a transformative initiative, which has been instrumental in equipping parents with essential skills and knowledge while simultaneously providing enriching experiences for children.



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During the sessions, parents participate in a series of workshops and discussions led by qualified educators from CCE Orange. Topics covered range from effective communication and positive discipline strategies to health and safety concerns. Specifically, programs challenge conventional notions of discipline, emphasizing a positive and constructive approach to parenting.

Simultaneously, children partake in engaging activities tailored to their age group, fostering their social, emotional, and cognitive development. These activities may include games, arts and crafts, team-building exercises, and interactive discussions on relevant topics. By providing parallel programming for both parents and children, the program creates a supportive environment where families can learn and grow together.

The partnership between CCE Orange and the school districts has been ongoing for several years, demonstrating a sustained commitment to enhancing family well-being in the community. While the specific duration of each program session may vary, the overall partnership has endured, continuing to benefit families in Orange County.

*Learn more about this partnership [here](#).*

## **Introduction**

Lack of readily available educational resources can pose challenges for communities, impacting the overall well-being of children. This case study explores the integration of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Orange County (Orange CCE) parenting education programs in school systems and the services offered. The strategic inclusion of parenting education in schools empowers parents with essential skills and knowledge crucial for supporting their children's well-being. School partnerships in Orange CCE serve as a strong example of the power of partnerships in increasing support, providing a model for optimizing their impact in school settings.

## **Background**

Parenting education programs provide support, guidance, and information to parents and caregivers to enhance their knowledge and skills in raising children. These programs cover a range of topics related to child development, effective communication, discipline strategies, health and safety, and emotional well-being. The key objectives of parenting education programs include skill development, child development knowledge, behavior management, emotional support, and promoting healthy family relationships.

CCE connects communities with Cornell University research to enrich and empower the residents of New York State. CCE plays a vital role in enhancing the well-being of individuals, through educational programs including parenting, family life, and family dynamics across the lifespan. The partnership between CCE Orange and school districts began with invitations from various school districts for CCE Orange to provide parenting classes and community workshops. In the case of the Washingtonville School District, the partnership was facilitated through the school social worker, who served on the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Program Advisory Council for two terms. This connection fostered relationships with other key staff members, leading to discussions with board members and the superintendent about community engagement and well-being support for faculty and staff, thereby evolving the partnership beyond the initial program offerings.

One program offering was *Discipline Is Not a Dirty Word* which focuses on reshaping perspectives on discipline within the context of parenting. The program aims to challenge common misconceptions surrounding discipline which is often interpreted as punishment and control. Instead, the curriculum advocates for a positive and constructive approach to discipline, focusing on teaching children essential life skills, fostering self-discipline, and promoting a healthy parent-child relationship. *The Strengthening Families Program 10-14* (SFP 10-14) is a

comprehensive, evidence-based - prevention series designed to address behavioral, emotional, academic, and social challenges. SFP 10-14 focuses on enhancing family relationships, parenting skills, and youth social and life skills. The curriculum includes three courses covering parent training, youth skills training, and family life skills training, incorporating elements like effective communication, problem-solving, substance use education, and positive reinforcement. The program employs creative retention strategies and encourages booster sessions and ongoing family support groups for graduates to ensure the sustained application of learned skills.

### **Forming and maintaining the relationship**

The essence of effective parenting education programs lies in the recognition and understanding of the community's needs. This involves identifying gaps, actively participating in the community, and soliciting feedback to inform program development. Forming and maintaining relationships are crucial components, emphasizing the importance of being embedded within the community. Sharing resources and information, including curriculum and professional development opportunities, enhances the program's impact. Moreover, establishing good overall communication practices, such as getting acquainted with the community and school personnel fosters trust and collaboration. The success of parenting education programs hinges on the continuous cultivation of relationships, ensuring that the initiatives align with community needs and contribute positively to the well-being of parents and children.

### **Program Personnel**

The importance and responsibility of program personnel in parenting education programs encompass a broad range of skills and considerations, all aimed at providing valuable support and guidance to parents for the benefit of their children's well-being as well as their own. Program personnel should possess expertise and knowledge in parenting, child development, protective factors, and educational strategies. Personnel are also responsible for facilitating parenting education sessions. This involves creating a welcoming learning environment, engaging participants, and delivering content effectively. In Orange CCE, program personnel include a full-time family and community resilience educator (Resources Educator level) who provides professional development programs for faculty and staff, presents keynotes, maintains relationships with key personnel, and organizes and facilitates SFP 10-14. A part-time parenting educator is also contracted to provide parenting education virtually, including parenting series and workshops.

### **Partners and supports**

Forming partnerships with schools and key organizations brings numerous advantages to parenting education programs. Building strong relationships with key staff members within schools is essential for the success of parenting education programs. This collaboration allows for a more nuanced understanding of the school environment and enables targeted interventions that align with the school's goals and challenges. Partnering with organizations like the Orange County Youth Bureau and the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Council provides access to additional community resources and support. These collaborations strengthen the program's ability to address diverse needs, particularly in cases where substance use may be a concern.

### **Conclusion**

This case study addresses critical issues faced by communities and school-aged children, emphasizing the benefits of parenting education for child wellbeing. It recognizes the importance of providing parents with tools and knowledge for comprehensive support. Community engagement and collaboration are highlighted, strengthening the community's commitment to children's healthy development through workshops and events. The case study recognizes and acknowledges the ways in which the level of care and nurturing approaches present in a community impacts parents' ability to apply the resources offered to them and to feel supported in the process. It also underscores the long-term impact of parenting education on child development practices, effective communication, and promoting healthy families and advocates for addressing disparities in resources by making essential knowledge universally accessible, ensuring optimal health and development for every child.

**Visit [The Parenting Project website](#)**

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