



Building Strong Families

Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices is a research-based educational program that helps families identify and build on their strengths, face challenges, and make informed choices.

An interdisciplinary program of Human Environmental Sciences University of Missouri Extension

Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices

Program Impacts from A Whole Family Approach Program April 2008

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INTRODUCTION

University of Missouri Extension's *Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices* program (<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf>) helps families find their strengths, build on those strengths, and learn skills to create stronger families, improve relationships, and increase communication. The program draws from an interactive, 13-topic curriculum to provide a series of life skills workshops that are supported by strength-based research. Building Strong Families targets working families with children, but it can be and has been adapted to reach many different audiences (e.g., teens, grandparents, and childcare providers).

Individual groups can customize the multi-session program by choosing from the following topics: Family Strengths, Communicating, Managing Stress, Child Self-Care, Food and Fitness, Working, Setting Goals, Positive Discipline, Money Matters, Balancing Responsibilities, Consumer Beware, Healthy House, and Kids and Self-Esteem.

A parallel curriculum for youth (ages 5-12) is being developed and currently has five topics. Building Strong Families for Youth can be used as a stand-alone piece or in combination with the Building Strong Families for Adults program for A Whole Family Approach series. The program begins with family members working together, and subsequently, youth and adults continue the sessions separately.

University of Missouri Extension offered a series of the Building Strong Families Program to families in Randolph County. Grant funding from the University of Missouri Human Environmental Sciences Extension Development Fund along with the Randolph County Extension Council, the Randolph County Family and Community Education Council, and the Coates Street Presbyterian Church made the five workshops possible. Facilitators held the five-session series in March and April 2006. Topics included Family Strengths, Communicating, Self-Esteem, Balancing Responsibilities and Managing Stress.

Twenty families registered for the program series. The program began with dinner as families ate together, and then youth and adults separated for the workshop portion. Youth participated in Building Strong Families for Youth activities, while the adults participated in the Building Strong Families for Adults. Childcare was provided for children ages 4 and under.

To see if adults and youth made life changes after attending the Building Strong Families program, an evaluation team asked participants to complete Pre- and Post-tests and share their experience in the program and changes in their families since coming to the workshops. Both youth and adults had the chance to participate in the process. Adult participants also were surveyed by telephone at one year from the end of the program. This report presents the development and implementation of the survey process, an analysis of the data collected, and a summary of findings.

Survey Development

The Evaluation team consisted of Lucy Schrader, Building Strong Families Program Coordinator; Alison Copeland, State 4-H Youth Specialist; and Jean Van Booven-Shook, Research Associate. The research procedures used and all documents described here were submitted to and approved by the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board. The Evaluation team developed several survey instruments to evaluate the Building Strong Families program. These instruments assessed the participants' experiences with the program and their perceptions of the characteristics of their families. Similar Pre- and Post-Tests were given at the beginning and end at the program to both youth and adult participants. In this way, the evaluators could note differences in responses from the beginning to the end of the program.

Adult Survey Instruments Pre- and Post-Tests

The evaluation team administered a "Pre-Test" and "Post-Test" to the adults that participated in the Building Strong Families program. These instruments collected information from parents about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the Building Strong Families program. Participants took the Pre- and Post-Tests on the first and last sessions of class, respectively. Participants completed a Consent Form before completing any evaluation sections. The Pre- and Post-Tests were identical except for the addition of three open-ended questions on the Post-Test which asked the participant to reflect over their experiences and knowledge gained in the workshops and the changes they may have made with their families since participating in the program as a result of that knowledge.

The first section asked participants for their demographic information, such as their age range, sex, race, and the age of their children and whether or not they lived in the home of the participant.

Subsequent sections of the survey were designed to learn about the perceptions the adults had of the characteristics of and relationships they had in their family. In the second section, participants rated their satisfaction with characteristics of their families in particular topic areas. The family characteristics surveyed included such as Family Strengths, Communicating, Managing Stress, Balancing Responsibilities, and Kids and Self-Esteem, and "happiness as a family," for example. The five-point scale ranged from a "1" indicating they were "least satisfied" to "5" being "most satisfied."

In the third section of the survey, participants chose one of four responses to indicate how often their families did various family-building activities such as spending time together, communicating, sharing responsibilities, showing caring and appreciation, spending meals together, etc. Participants could mark whether their families did the activity "A lot of the time," "Some of the Time," "Not very often," or "Never."

Finally, adults wrote the age of each child and as many one-word descriptors they could think of to describe traits of each of their children.

The Post-Test part of the survey asked three additional questions of participants. Respondents were asked what specific changes they or their families made as a result of attending Building Strong Families, to name 2 or 3 things that they learned in the workshops that they didn't know before that have helped them the most, and what they think were the most important changes in their family since attending the Building Strong Families program.

Adult Follow-Up Survey

University of Missouri Extension offered the *Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices* program in Moberly in the spring of 2006. During April of 2007, approximately one year after the program ended, researchers began to follow up with the individuals who had taken part in the program. Individuals from the program were contacted by telephone for a phone interview of approximately 15 minutes in length and were offered a \$15 Wal-Mart gift card in exchange for their participation.

The researcher asked respondents why they were motivated to participate in the program in the first place, if their feelings about participating in the class changed over time, and about whether they had developed relationships with anyone as a result of their participation in the class. They were also asked about what topics and activities were particularly memorable or helpful, and how they may have shared that activity with others or implemented what they learned in the workshop with their families. Participants were asked to reflect on how the program affected them as individuals and their relationships with their children or other family members. Finally, participants were asked how the program could be improved in the future.

Youth Survey Instruments

The evaluation team administered the youth survey instruments to the children that participated in the Building Strong Families program. These instruments consisted of a "Pre-Test" and "Post-Test," which were given on the first and last sessions of class, respectively. The two tests differed only with the addition of one question on the Pre-Test that asked the open-ended question about the youth's expectations for the program: "How do you expect that this program will help you?"

The surveys asked youth to respond to a series of statements about their perceptions of themselves and their families. The first section asked youth to provide demographic information such as age, sex, race, and grade, as well as two questions asking them to name the adults that live with them and the adults that take care of them.

The second section of the survey consisted of a relational map that the evaluation team designed to assess the youth's relationships with fellow Building Strong Families class members. In this exercise, youth indicated their relationships with other youth in the class on a pictograph. They drew colored lines from their own names to the other class member's names provided on the diagram to indicate class members that they felt they "know pretty well," "knew before coming to Building Strong Families," or "see outside of class."

The third section contained a number of statements describing various family activities. Here, youth indicated how often they did the particular activities with their families by marking one of the following responses: "A lot," "Some," "A little," or "None."

The fourth section of the survey asked youth to respond to a series of statements over topics that include self-worth, relationships, and balancing responsibilities with one of the following responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

Parents completed a Parental Consent Form to give permission for their children to participate in the evaluation process before any evaluation began. In addition, youth had the chance to decline or agree to participate. They could decline even if their parents had given them permission to do the evaluation forms.

Survey Results

Youth Survey Results

Demographics

Eleven youth took part in the Pre-Test, and five youth took part in the Post-Test, with ages ranging from 5 to 13, with an average age of 7.9. These youth ranged in grade level from Pre-kindergarten to seventh grade. Four of these youth were females, while seven were males. One youth indicated being multi-racial, and two youth indicated they were black. Eight of the youth indicated they were white.

For reasons to be discussed here, the data obtained from the youth will be of limited use. However, this study shows several implications for further research that will be described in greater detail further on in this report. Following is a discussion of the results of the surveys, with numerical breakdowns of the data in the Appendix.

Limitations of the Survey Results

Small Sample Size

First, the number of fully completed surveys was extremely small. While 11 youth began the Pre-Test, only 5 youth worked to complete both the Pre- and Post-Test. In all, however, for those who completed both the Pre- and Post-Tests, three of these youth left a significant number of questions blank. Therefore, comparisons between pre- and post-test results can only be made with a total of two youth. As this number is

so small, no conclusions about the effect of the Building Strong Families Program on children can be made.

Questionable Comprehension of the Survey by Youth

The second reason that the results of the youth survey is of limited use is that it appears questionable that the youthfully understood the survey. To the researcher administering the surveys, it appeared that some youth may have simply been circling answers, so that their responses did not truly reflect how they felt about the particular question or issue presented. The results from one section of the survey in particular illustrates that youth did not understand that section.

To learn more about whether the Building Strong Families program helped participants gain social support networks, the evaluators asked youth to draw a pictograph that showed their relationships to the other class participants before, during, and after the program.

However, the results of the pictograph showed that the youth might not have understood the exercise, because their responses showed internal inconsistency. Evaluators administered the survey the first day of class. Youth were to draw a red line from themselves to other youth indicating that they felt this youth was one “that you feel you know pretty well.” Logically, as it was the *first* day of class, youth should have also indicated (by drawing a black line) that these same youth were youth “that you knew before you started coming to Building Strong Families.” However, four youth did not, indicating that they may not have understood the exercise.

Of the five youth that did both the Pre- and Post- test, answers in this area were logically consistent, indicating that these five youth understood the exercise. However, it was very difficult to see trends from the Pre- to Post-Test on the youth survey.

Implications for Future Research with Youth

The fact that it appears that several youth did not understand the relational map in the second section of the test, as indicated by logical inconsistencies in their responses, as well as our inability to make Pre- and Post-Test comparisons on the third and fourth sections due to the small number of youth completing them, means that we have very little information on which to base any conclusion about the impact of the Building Strong Families program on the youth, or their perceptions of themselves and of their family life.

As mentioned above, the third section of the survey contained a number of statements describing various family activities and asks youth to indicate how often they did the particular activities with their families, while the fourth section of the survey asked youth to respond to a series of statements over topics that include self-worth, relationships, and balancing responsibilities. Because no change between the Pre- and Post-Tests

can be measured, the answers of these eleven youth on the pre-test provide simply a description of those particular youth's perceptions of their families only at the outset of the program.

There are a number of points to consider for future research. First, it was determined that due to the nature of working with young children, more than one researcher is needed when administering the surveys to youth so that questions from the youth can be adequately explained. Secondly, it seemed to the researcher that some youth may not have truly understood the survey and instead, simply circled answers. Therefore it might be helpful to administer the surveys in one-on-one interviews to gauge whether the youth has adequate understanding. Open-ended questions about the youth's family life and the Building Strong Families program could be addressed in a one-on-one interview method as well.

Quite obviously, more data must be obtained from a larger number of youth if any conclusions are to be made in the pre- to post-test comparison that might measure changes in the youth's family life. Finally, in the future, it would be interesting to analyze the youth outcomes in relation to those of the adults with whom they came to answer the following question: How might outcomes on a parent's survey coincide with outcomes for their child on the youth survey?

Adult Survey Results

Demographics

Reporting on all respondents that took either the Pre- or the Post-test or both gives us a description of the individuals who participated in the Moberly Building Strong Families educational program. At the same time, narrowing our view to only those respondents that took BOTH the Pre and Post-Tests allows us to view differences in response from the time of the Pre-Test period to the time of the Post-Test. For this reason, a discussion of both groups- the one including ALL participants that took one or both surveys and the subgroup, that took BOTH, will be discussed here.

Of the 18 respondents that completed some part of the survey, 9 of these completed both the Pre- and Post-tests. A table listing age, sex, and racial breakdown follows and depicts all respondents. Participants reported a total of 18 children on their surveys, with 14 non-duplicated (there were two couples reporting on the same children). The children's ages ranged from 1 year of age to age 10, with an average age of 5.3. The most common number of children reported by respondents was 2.

No respondent listed more than three children living in the home with him or her. For all respondents who took one or both tests, they reported their children as ranging from age 2 weeks to 44 years (a respondent reporting on the age of their grown child). Six respondents were from ages 20-30, 2 from 30-40, and 1 from 50-60 years of age. Twelve respondents completed the Post-Test, and 8 indicated they had attended "most of the workshops," while 4 indicated they had attended all the workshops.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Breakdown:

Sex/Race	Female	Male	Black	White
Took either Test	14	4	2	16
Took both Pre- and Post-Test	7	2	1	8

Age	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60+
Took either Test	10	4	2	1	1
Took both Pre- and Post- Test	6	2	0	1	0

Children Living in the Home

Respondents indicated whether their children lived in the home with them. Most individuals taking the class had their minor children living with them in their homes. On the Pre-test, one individual noted that one of their minor children was not living with them but at the time of the Post-test noted that this child was with them in their home. On the Post-test, a couple that had indicated having a foster child in the home no longer listed that child as being present.

Respondents Rate Family Characteristics

Adults were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their families in the topic areas that are the focus of the Building Strong Families curriculum. Respondents could mark their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5, with a “1” indicating the least amount of satisfaction, and a “5” indicating the highest level of satisfaction. In addition, respondents were asked to rate their “happiness as a family.”

Table 2: Family Characteristics Satisfaction Levels

Family Characteristics topic area (for 9 respondents that took both the Pre- and the Post-Test	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Change
Kids and Self-Esteem	3.1	3.9	0.8
Managing Stress	2.4	2.9	0.5
Balancing Responsibilities	2.8	3.3	0.5
Family Strengths	3.8	4.0	0.2
Communicating	3.4	3.4	0.0
Happiness as a Family	4.1	3.8	-0.3

*For those who wrote two answers, the average score of the two was used.

Areas in which respondents rated their families the lowest were in “Managing Stress” and then “Balancing Responsibilities,” showing the lowest and second lowest ratings, respectively, of all areas for both the Pre- and Post-Tests. However, the mean score for these same two areas increased from the Pre- to the Post-test, showing the second and third highest amount of overall rating increase. This seems to indicate that while families may struggle in these areas, they found the program to be the most helpful in improving family relations in these topic areas. The ratings for “Family Strengths” and “Kids and Self-Esteem” were higher from the Pre- to the Post-Test as well, with “Kids and Self-Esteem” showing the most increase in ratings over any other area. The average score did not change for the “Communicating” area. In only one area- “Happiness as a Family” – did the mean score drop.

While an increase in overall family happiness after Building Strong Families program participation would, naturally, be a desired program outcome, families did not indicate this to be the case. However, the drop is accounted for by a single point rating difference in scoring from the Pre- to the Post-test in just three respondents. While the drop could be due to respondents change in their perception of their family’s happiness, more thoughtful interpretation of their family’s characteristics as a result of participating in the program, or simply test-taking inconsistencies from one day to the next, the number of respondents that account for the change is so low that no conclusion should be made or assumed about other groups that take the program.

Time Spent on Family Activities

Adults were asked to indicate how much time they spent with their families in certain family-building activities. Respondents could indicate how often a particular activity occurred in their family by marking “A lot of the time,” “Some of the time,” “Not very often,” or “Never.” For evaluation purposes, evaluators assigned these responses a score ranging from 0 to 3. Responses were scored as “0” if the respondent indicated they “Never” did that particular activity with their family, a “1” for marking the response “Not very often,” a “2” indicating the activity occurred “some of the time” on that activity, and finally, a “3” indicating the activity occurred “A lot of the time.”

Table 3: Time Spent on Family Activities

Family activity characteristic	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Change
Solve a conflict in a positive way	1.6	2.1	0.5
My child thinks that I listen to him	1.7	2.1	0.4
Talk with your family about fun things	2.3	2.6	0.3
Have fun together	2.3	2.6	0.3

Encourage one another	2.2	2.4	0.2
My child thinks that I understand him.	1.8	2	0.2
Show caring and appreciation	2.3	2.4	0.1
Celebrate traditions together	2.4	2.4	0
Spend time alone with each child	1.9	1.9	0
Spend time on spiritual life	1.6	1.6	0
For his/her age, my child shares a fair amount of responsibility around the house	1.3	1.3	0
Communicate openly	2.2	2.1	-0.1
Spend time together	2.6	2.3	-0.3
My child is able to accomplish his/her chores.	1.7	1.2	-0.5

Areas that showed increases from the Pre- to the Post-Test in the amount of time respondents indicated their families spent on that particular activity were the following, with “Solving conflict in a positive way” showing the greatest amount of change:

- Solve a conflict in a positive way
- My child thinks that I listen to him
- Talk with your family about fun things
- Have fun together
- Encourage one another
- My child thinks that I understand him
- Show caring and appreciation

As mentioned above (See previous chart on Family Characteristic topics), adults rated their families in “Balancing Responsibilities” among the lowest of all the areas that were rated. The fact that adults considered this to be an area of difficulty for their families showed consistently in the survey from the first section to the second. Here in this section, adults marked regarding chores that “For his/her age, my child shares a fair amount of responsibility around the house,” and “My child is able to accomplish his/her chores” as generally occurring not very often.

Of 14 characteristics adults could rate, the average score for seven of the characteristics generally fell above a “2”, indicating that they did these activities at least “some of the time.” These areas below are the ones they rated most highly:

- Spend time together
- Celebrate traditions together
- Talk with your family about fun things

- Have fun together
- Show caring and appreciation
- Encourage one another
- Communicate openly

The results of the survey for the Moberly Building Strong Families program represent a very small sample size, with only nine individuals completing both the Pre- and Post-Tests. Usually, differences in mean scores were accounted for from the Pre- to the Post-Test by sometimes one or two, but sometimes four or five, adult responses. Because this current study contained such a small sample size, any trends seen cannot be determined to be statistically significant. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that it should not be expected that another group will necessarily achieve similar results, or to assume that any trend noted here is particularly strong. However, the discussion here can serve as a template for future studies when examining the same trends.

The implications of what we learn from asking families to rate the amount of time spent on various activities are several. Those characteristics that fall at the top of the chart are those that families indicate the greatest amount of improvement. By observing those areas showing the greatest amounts of change, we learn about what aspects of the Building Strong Families Program that families found to be the most needed and helpful. Conversely, those activities that fall towards the bottom of the chart indicate areas where families see no or negative amounts of change, indicating perhaps that the families did not find the program helpful in those respects, or that families continue to struggle in these areas even at the end of the program. In this case, spending more time and emphasis on these particular areas of concern may result in the greatest help for families.

Respondents Describe the Traits of Their Children

To learn more about how respondents characterized the qualities of their children, adults were asked to list as many one-word descriptors of each of their children that they were able to think of. Then, evaluators coded the traits that each respondent listed according to whether they were generally considered to be positive or negative qualities. The number of positive versus negative qualities listed, as well as the number of qualities listed overall, was compared between the Pre- and the Post-Tests.

Of six respondents who completed this section of the survey, there were a total of 13 children described in total. Researchers hypothesized that respondents would list more positive traits, and more traits in general, to describe their children on the Post-test than they did on the Pre-test. The logic underlying this assumption was that because one of the purposes of the Building Strong Families program was to encourage individuals to be more thoughtful about their relationships with their family members, that respondents might list more traits when describing their children.

Table 4: Comparison of Positive and Negative Traits Listed by Respondents

	Pre-Test Traits		Post-Test Traits	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Number of traits listed by respondents, total	86	21	102	12
Average # of traits that respondents listed per child	6.6	1.6	7.8	0.9
Average # of traits listed overall	8.2		9.0	

Respondents listed a higher number of positive traits per child on average on the Post-test than they did on the Pre-test: 7.8: 6.6. At the same time, the average number of negative traits listed per child went down from 1.6 on the Pre-test to .9 on the Post test. The total number of traits respondents used to describe their children increased on the Post-test as well, from 8.2 to 9.0 on average. A look at the number of traits respondents listed is perhaps even more telling. The total number of positive traits listed by respondents to describe their children increased from 86 on the Pre-test to 102 on the Post-test. At the same time, the total number of negative traits listed decreased from 21 on the Pre-Test to 12 on the Post-Test.

On further analysis, however, it seems that the differences in numbers of responses are accounted for by only two of the six respondents completing this section of the survey. In fact, four of the respondents listed fewer positive responses on the Post-test than on the Pre-test. Also, for these four individuals, the total number of negative traits they listed for all their children remained the same on the Post-test as on the Pre-test, and the two individuals whose number of positive responses went up on the Pre-test to the Post-test also accounted for a smaller number of total negative trait listings on the Post-test.

What, then, does this mean? For those individuals that accounted for the change, the amount of change seemed striking, indicating that for these participants, the program resulted in more thoughtful appreciation of their children's qualities. Further data collection on a greater number of program participants will be able to shed more light on how program participation affects participants' descriptions of their children.

Number Of Positive Responses From Pre- To Post-Test

Respondent	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Trend
A	8	7	Down
B	9	31	Up
C	12	11	Down
D	18	14	Down
E	19	23	Up
F	20	16	Down

*Two of the traits listed were ambiguous.

Descriptors Used By All Respondents Surveyed To Describe Their Children:

- *A wonderful daughter*
- *A wonderful mother*
- *accepting*
- *active*
- *affectionate*
- *aggressive*
- *alert*
- *ambitious*
- *angry*
- *appreciates her life*
- *appreciative*
- *argumentative*
- *artistic*
- *athletic*
- *bad*
- *beautiful*
- *big-hearted*
- *boss*
- *brilliant*
- *busy*
- *can talk until you understand*
- *cares*
- *caring*
- *cautious*
- *clean*
- *clown*
- *committed*
- *communicates much better*
- *compassionate*
- *competitive*
- *compliant*
- *confident*
- *courteous*
- *crafty*
- *creative*
- *curious*
- *cute*
- *daring*
- *defiant*
- *demanding*
- *determined*
- *difficult-strong willed since age 7*
- *disciplined*
- *doesn't listen*
- *dramatic*
- *eager*
- *easy*
- *easygoing*
- *emotional*
- *encouraging*
- *energetic*
- *entertainer*
- *extrovert*
- *family oriented*
- *full of energy*
- *full of life*
- *fun*
- *fun-loving*
- *funny*
- *good listener*
- *good workers*
- *good-looking*
- *goofy*
- *handsome*
- *happy*
- *happiness*
- *hard-headed*
- *hardworking*
- *headstrong/persistent*
- *helpful*
- *helps others*
- *helps with sister*
- *hits and chases her sister but playful*
- *hollers at me*
- *honest*
- *imaginative*
- *impulsive*
- *independent*
- *inquisitive*
- *intelligent*
- *intense*
- *introvert*
- *irritated*
- *joy*
- *joyful*
- *kind*
- *lackadaisical*
- *laidback*
- *lazy (unchallenged at school)*
- *leader*
- *learns well*
- *likes people*
- *loner*
- *loud*
- *lovable*
- *love*
- *loves everyone*
- *loves God*
- *loving*
- *loyal*
- *mean*
- *mild-mannered*
- *Mommy's baby*
- *needy*
- *nice*
- *not family-oriented*
- *not shy*
- *nurturing*
- *observant*
- *opinionated*
- *orderly*
- *ornery*

- *outgoing*
- *outspoken*
- *peacemaker*
- *persistent*
- *playful*
- *plays well*
- *positive*
- *pretty*
- *Princess*
- *protective*
- *quiet*
- *rambunctious*
- *reader*
- *reserved*
- *responsible*
- *rotten*
- *self-centered (at times)*
- *self-motivated*
- *sensitive*
- *shares*
- *she loves family*
- *shy*
- *silly*
- *silliness*
- *smart*
- *smiles*
- *social*
- *spiritual*
- *spoiled*
- *Spontaneous*
- *strong*
- *strong-willed*
- *stubborn*
- *successful*
- *sunshine*
- *sweet*
- *takes on challenges*
- *talkative*
- *talks back*
- *task-oriented*
- *testy*
- *thoughtful*
- *torn between two parents*
- *tries to help*
- *understanding*
- *unique*
- *valuable*
- *very clean*
- *very good parent*
- *very hard-headed*
- *very intelligent*
- *very sensitive*
- *very smart*
- *wants to be in charge*
- *wants to make everyone happy*
- *wise*
- *wonderful*
- *works hard*

*Two respondents described their adult children

Post-Test Summary Questions

To measure changes in response from the Pre- to the Post-Test, evaluators designed the two tests to be identical except for three open-ended questions added to the Post-Test. These open-ended questions were designed to elicit a summary of the respondents' experiences with their families during the time period in which they were attending sessions of the Building Strong Families Program. These questions asked about knowledge gained in the program and specific changes their families made as a result of that knowledge. Responses from these questions are outlined below. The responses show most vividly the themes of making an effort to spend more time together and of better quality communication:

What specific changes did you or your family make as a result of attending Building Strong Families?

Most responses to this question involved families reporting more effort to communicate and spend more time together.

- *(We spend more time) listening as well as talking.*
- *I think that our family grows strong, caring, loving, more independent. That's what I like about this group.*
- *Better communication.*
- *(We) try to communicate better. (I am) more knowledgeable of child development.*
- *We need to spend more time together at home- less activity. Some activity is good, but I realize our lives are overscheduled!*
- *(We) communicate more.*
- *Trying to spend more family time together.*
- *(I learned I need to) calm down.*
- *I try and talk to my kids more about how they feel.*
- *(I work with the kids to) include them in decision making on chores and activities.*
- *Spending more quality time together.*

Name 2 or 3 things that you learned in the workshops that you didn't know before that have helped you most. (Duplicative comments have been removed.)

- *Other people have some of the same problems as you have.*
- *That everyone should help each other.*
- *Child's developmental age- what she actually understands. "I feel" statements.*
- *Self-esteem. Listen to your kids.*
- *Always keep constant communication. Have boundaries.*
- *Let the kids take part in everything more. Listening to what they are telling me about what happens to them. Working on our self-esteem, and managing stress.*
- *Make sure to let my kids know I'm listening and understand what they are saying.*
- *That it is never too late to shape your children. To enjoy your children and life and relax instead of rushing through it.*

What do you think are the most important changes in your family since attending Building Strong Families?

- *Getting along. Setting chores. How important my children are.*
- *Honesty, trust, helping each other out.*
- *We all communicate and understand each other better.*

- *Try and listen to each other more. Be more understanding. Give child more attention.*
- *Spending quality time.*
- *Choose the battles.*
- *Kids seem to get along a little better.*
- *Kids and I have come to understand each other.*
- *Self-esteem, managing stress, communicating.*
- *Communication.*
- *There is a lot. I just can't pinpoint one. But I appreciate everything that you guys did especially (the facilitator); he didn't have to come and try to point all of us in the right direction.*

Follow Up Survey Results

One of the researchers called participants in the spring of 2007 to conduct a one year follow-up phone survey with the adults who participated in the spring 2006 Building Strong Families program in Moberly. The purpose of the survey was to learn further information about how the Building Strong Families program affected families after having a length of time to implement strategies learned in the program.

Of those who participated in the program, several were no longer reachable by phone due to either having changed their phone numbers or moving out of the area. Follow up letters were sent in May of 2007 to those who were unable to be reached. These letters explained the purpose of the study and the incentive of receiving a \$15 gift card in hopes that participants would respond to the letter if they were still at their previous address, but with a new phone number. If they had moved, researchers hoped the letter would be forwarded.

The telephone survey took from approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Eight individuals took part in the survey, representing 100 percent of those that could ultimately be reached by telephone. Respondents seemed quite willing to participate in the survey. It should be noted that researchers were ultimately unable to locate any respondents whose telephone numbers were not the same as given at the time of the class in the spring of 2006.

What motivated you to participate in the Building Strong Families Program?

The respondents mentioned two main reasons for attending the Building Strong Families series. The reason most often listed was a familiarity with a partnering community program that had a relationship with University Extension or the Building Strong Families Facilitator. Respondents listed programs and agencies such as the Family Counseling Center, the GED program, Caring Communities, and Family Literacy classes, the Missouri Alliance, or a court-ordered parenting

class. Only one person said they thought they may have heard about the program through the newspaper.

A second main reason that everyone mentioned as a reason for attending the program was that they valued parenting skills and family relationships. One couple said they were seeking family education classes that were required as part of their commitment as foster parents.

- *I was employed at Family Counseling Center, and so I invited my daughter to go. I thought it would be a good idea.*
- *I believe in families. Anything I can do to improve my parenting skills. You're not born with parenting skills. Through the class you can learn techniques from others. Mom was a GED teacher, and I heard about the class that way.*
- *Everyone can use new ideas with parenting. I was having lots of trouble with my son and I needed it. We're not born with great ideas on how to raise children! I heard about this class through the GED program with Caring Communities.*
- *(I found out about the program because I) read about it in the paper, probably the Monitor Index or Missouri Alliance. We're foster parents needing classes. It was put on well, and it was nice of the University to put it on and spend money on us. We don't regret it a bit.*
- *Provide a better environment for teaching and disciplining them and communicate better. I was in a Family Literacy class and knew the facilitator. We were told about it through my daughter's daycare and Family Literacy program from there.*
- *(I found out about the class) through court-ordered parenting class, I got the phone number, but the class was optional. I had just divorced, and was looking for something to ground everyone and bring back into a family.*
- *I am a licensed foster parent with my husband we need so many hours of parenting training a year, so we are always looking for classes. Heard about the class through Missouri Alliance, the agency that holds their (foster parent) license.*
- *I knew the facilitator personally.*

Do you have contact with others from your group outside of class?

-and-

Did you before the workshops?

On these two questions, all individuals indicated that although they may have recognized other class members, or occasionally ran into other Building Strong Families class members in public or at the social service centers through which

they were connected, they did not have personal relationships with other class members.

Are there any activities from the workshops that stuck out in your mind?

Most of the respondents indicated that they could not think of any particular activities from the workshops. One respondent described the communications activity, where class participants were asked to listen and follow directions, so that they could reflect on the ways they communicate effectively or not with their children. One respondent said that she remembered “everything and that she was working on different self-esteem issues with children.” For example, she works to find mentors for each, and named a certain family member to be like a big sister to the foster children who come to her home. She liked the "skeleton person-shaped doll" an activity that helped participants turn negative statements into positive ones. She stated that she still has the book she was given in class and that she goes over it and reads it again. Several participants remembered particular emphases of the program, or had positive comments about the program in general:

- *...My overall impression was that it was a good program for parents raising young kids.*
- *The teacher was wonderful. He used his personal experiences (to illustrate class points). I can't say enough good things. It was nice the kids had activities going on for them; it is hard to come up with a baby sitter.*
- *(I remember the facilitator recounting) how much his mom made him feel loved by stopping to look at them and talk. So I make more effort to stop and look at them, like when I'm washing the dishes.*
- *Really liked how they emphasized sitting down and eating with family. It's very important. Nice that they encourage it.*

Which activity would you say was your favorite?

- *I remember ripping up the paper doll.*
- *The whole thing- use a lot of that (information I learned in the class) with grandkids too.*
- *Paper man. (Whatever) you would say to kids in the heat of the moment, you had to tear off a limb, like if you say something mean to them.*
- *Where we couldn't look at paper and drew picture.*
- *Self-esteem stuck out the most. I really liked- where we had the structure of a person and put the person together. If we tore off the arm, we*

discussed how we'd fix it. Then we made the shield- coat of arms, to make family unique, talking about what is unique about your family.

- *That one where we had to listen and follow directions.*

Did you share that activity with anyone in your family or with friends?

Respondents recalled sharing the information from the Building Strong Families program activities in different ways. One respondent indicated that she uses the information she learned with her grandchildren. Three others responded that they told others about the program:

- *I use the information with grandkids.*
- *Yes, because my sister wanted to go (to Building Strong Families) but there was not enough room in that workshop. So I told her (about the class, so now) she's going to Love and Logic.*
- *Yes, and I told several people about the program.*
- *Yes, with the kids in the home and with friend's kids. I give my friends advice because of the classes and information I get as a foster Mom. They (my friends) come back and say it's helpful.*

Which topic was your favorite workshop? Why do you say that?

- *Balancing Responsibilities. You can pass on responsibility to your spouse and others- it's good for them.*
- *Discipline, because it's so controversial these days, and it's so good to get ideas besides spanking.*
- *Communicating- be aware of surroundings- what's really being said went more to learn strategies to discipline, and to learn how to not be bothered by little things.*
- *We've made a point since the program to spend time together doing activities as a family. It pulled us together. We go to the park, eat supper together at the table, and watch movies. We didn't do that (eating together at the table) before the divorce, we ate in front of TV.*
- *Managing Stress and Balancing Responsibilities. (The topics were) useful to my husband. (Since the class,) he senses I'm stressed or frustrated. He hints to me that "maybe we need to breathe." We have little codes. We don't do it in front of the kids, but we talk it out and think of strategies to be on the same page or the kids will tear you apart. It's wonderful for a husband and wife to take a class together...because kids know how to divide and conquer. If any couple can take these classes together, it would be wonderful. We went over responsibility, recognizing if you or a kid are more stressed out than normal and how to relieve it. Learn to say no if you can't do something, there are limits on what you can do.*
- *Communication, Balancing Responsibility.*
- *If they had another one we'd take it. It's worth charging people to go to it.*

Do you think that being in the Building Strong Families program has affected you as a person? If yes, how?

Except for one respondent who described herself as already possessing the skills presented in Building Strong Families program as a result of her career in the mental health field, all other respondents provided reflective comments about the changes they had seen come about in themselves since they began the Building Strong Families program:

- *It made me more conscious of my parenting techniques-things I do consciously or unconsciously. (I learned) I'm not alone (in parenting), or I could do this better or different, (if I did I might) have a different (positive) outcome.*
- *Yes, because I was doing Love and Logic seminar, so the combination helped me be aware of what I'm saying and doing to have a more peaceful household, not chaos.*
- *I am a better person than when I walked in the door the first day. Sometimes you need to be re-taught.*
- *Yes. Especially for people who weren't raised a certain way, and don't know how to talk to kids. (Kids) don't have to be spanked for everything. (Discipline in our house involves), more talking it out than getting spanked like I was. People may not know there's other ways to do it.*
- *Made me more confident about what I did already know. Felt like I was on the right track.*
- *More positive, thinking more of discipline. (She learned you) don't have to spank all the time, it may not be warranted. Restructure to another positive behavior, there are other methods to use (besides spanking.)*
- *I was impressed with the presenter. Dinner being available is attractive, especially for the working mothers.*

Do you think that being in the Building Strong Families program has affected your relationship with your child or children (or children that you interact with)? If yes, how?

Two of the respondents said that they did not think that their Building Strong Families Program had affected their relationships with their children. However, they qualified this statement by explaining that because of their age or background (one in the mental health field already working with children), they felt that they already had these skills.

- *Always had a good relationship with my children, but anything I can do is one notch up the ladder. I actively look for things to be a better mom. I want a good relationship with them my entire life.*

- Yes, especially when he talked about how his mom made him feel loved. I didn't feel loved by my parents. From one generation to the next, if you have no one (you need someone) to set a good example.
- Listen to them more thoroughly and try to see from their standing what they're trying to tell me. A lot of people have lived a busy life and don't take time to listen to (their spouse) or to their kids.
- That's why I got into it. I think I learned a lot. And you only learn if you want to.
- I've made a point of us spending time together. Better communication, talking through things instead of getting mad. We're working on it.
- Has balanced it out more, made me stop and think that not every child is created equal. Not every child who is 7, is really 7 or 13 or 14, 13 or 14 (developmentally). Their mindset may be younger, so you really should think of discipline in terms of their development.
- No, but I'd sure I'd say yes if I didn't come from the background I have.

Do you think that being in the Building Strong Families program has affected your relationships with other adult family members? If yes, how?

Three individuals said "No" to this question, but several others gave long, thoughtful responses:

- I took class with my Mom. Now, maybe I can see things from her point of view and issues she went through when I was a child. As an adult, I can now understand her struggles more. I appreciate what she had to go through.
- I learned about the value of what women do (in the home. That is), if you paid her to do what she does, you'd have no money left. I learned when the wife talks, you need to listen- and to everybody. (As far as family), if you pull out one domino, then everyone falls down. You have to be a role model, because your kids will do what you do.
- I resented my mom; she let me get away with stuff until I got a spanking. I wish she'd have sought parenting education. She let me drop out at 16. She didn't raise me to respect her. I walked all over her. You should set good goals with your kids. I think she was never taught parenting either. I want my relationship with my kids to be (better) like that.
- Yes. I am more able to give advice; they (my friends) say "wow, it does work!" Sometimes they ask for advice.

How did you feel about coming to the Building Strong Families program at the beginning? Did this change over time? How?

All of the respondents had positive responses to this question. Most used the term "excited" to describe how they looked forward to participating in the

program. In fact, one participant said that she even asked the facilitator to inform her of upcoming classes because she liked it so much and because she needed class hours to maintain her foster care license.

- *Excited, it was something I looked forward to. What mother wouldn't look forward to having kids entertained and fed at the same time!*
- *Excited. I like doing things like that.*
- *Yes, (my feelings did change over time. At first, I) wasn't aware of what I was going to learn. I had no idea there was that many ways you could do it (build a strong family.) I enjoy learning about people. (I) didn't enjoy online stuff like this. I was hungry to get back (to the next session of the class), and disappointed when they had to cancel (due to weather).*
- *Excited, I had been in a short class before with the same facilitator and thought it was interesting. I wanted kids to do it too. I was scared at first because it was new.*
- *Excited about new things and doing things together. Only thing that changed was that some participants weren't cooperative and dominated. It was not (a problem with) the program, but the participants.*
- *Excited because of being a foster parent. I want to learn and do new things.*
- *Excited- I thought I'd learn something. The facilitator did a really good job, and I'm sure a lot of people got a lot out of it.*

At the same time that the respondents had positive things to say about their participation in class, a few had reservations about the class that related to the behavior of other class participants. The respondents that made these statements indicated they thought their classmates' poor behavior was a result of being required by family court to participate. Similar comments to these will be listed below in the subsequent section that addresses participants' ideas for how the Building Strong Families program could be improved.

- *I can't blame it on the facilitator, but a lot of people were asking what I thought were silly questions - interjecting while he was talking- so sometimes we didn't get the lesson done. I think they were on drugs. Really! They had bloodshot eyes and rambled on.*
- *At first I was anxious because of knowing some people didn't want to be there who might be around my kids. Some said some things I couldn't believe.*

How did this program reinforce your idea of what it means to be a strong family?

Most responses to this question revolved around the theme of the parent learning new techniques for interacting with and giving choices to their children:

- *I loved listening to the facilitator's tales of when he grew up on a farm- like I am raising my kids on a farm. I thought to myself about his examples. that "I can do that with my family, too." I enjoyed that. I am blessed to not have to struggle because I have good kids. I home school. If I need reinforcement, I know where to go; I know where the facilitator works. If I needed to call him, I wouldn't hesitate.*
- *I hope most people know how important that is (being a strong family).*
- *A family is only as strong as each link of a chain. If you have a strong family and include friends, I think, it'll show up.*
- *Taught me ways of handling things. Don't always say "no" -use other phrases.*
- *Giving me ideas, trying things and seeing it can work.*
- *It's okay to say "no," okay to allow kids to have some control and choices in the house because they are little and they will someday have to make choices. Before, they called me a "drill sergeant." Now I give behavioral choices.*
- *Reminding me that communication is really important. It's important to give kids a choice, really listen to how things affect them.*

What did you like best about this program?

- *The presenter.*
- *Interaction, better than reading a book about the topic, other people going through same thing, good support group.*
- *Liked the whole thing- hate to exclude one part of it.*
- *That he hit on several subjects. We could go back and revisit previous issues, new activities.*
- *Something every week to look forward to doing together. Kids looked forward to it.*
- *Like it all- very helpful.*
- *I liked the teacher!! (laughs) He was a real effective leader.*

How could Building Strong Families be improved?

- *I don't think anything. It was right on target, excellent. It was great to have a meal and the kids program. It was all taken care of, and we didn't have to rush around. Some (other) classes (that I took) I think, "Why did I even waste my hour?"*
- *It was really good, with a place for kids to go, and many couldn't go if they didn't have that.*
- *I'm probably not qualified to answer that, because I liked it so well, I wouldn't want to change it!*

Responses that provided suggestions for the improvement focused on two points, both of which may be related. Several suggested that the class agenda be more tightly controlled in some way, so that discussions stay closer to the topic on the agenda. Others resented that some appeared, intentionally or otherwise, to monopolize the group discussion.

- *Some were monopolizing the conversation and the presenter did the best he could but didn't want to be rude. Maybe he could have talked to them afterwards (so as not to take up class time with only their issues).*
- *Sometimes in discussions, one person monopolized conversations. The facilitator was being polite and trying to move class on so some people who were not as outspoken didn't get input. Find a way to limit discussion so that it not be monopolized by the same person.*
- *Maybe, like I said, some people were getting way off topic. It would be better to stay on track and use comment cards for discussion later- Too many people were having freedom of the floor.*

As mentioned in the section above that addressed the question asking participants about their feelings about coming to the Building Strong Families program in the beginning, and how those feelings changed over time, some respondents were displeased with the attitudes of some class participants. These respondents felt that some participants seemed to purposefully ask facetious questions in order to get the facilitator off topic, a strategy used, as these respondents indicated, to exhibit their displeasure at having been required to participate in the program. Participants were disturbed by what they described as the poor attitudes and behavior of the participants who they felt must have been required to be present as a result of their experiences with the family court system:

- *The only thing I would change is if people would listen more to the instructor- he did a very good job but some were not willing to learn.*
- *Eliminate people that really don't want to be there. I enjoyed it.*
- *Don't know. Maybe having people who are required to do it and people who want info to have two separate groups.*

CONCLUSION

Youth

Feedback from adults about their participation in the Building Strong Families program seems to be overwhelmingly positive. At the same time, very little conclusions about the youth component of the program could be made. This fact is due in part to 1) evidence that the youth may not have completely understood the survey instruments; 2) youth often left sections of the questionnaires blank

and 3) a very small number of youth completed both the Pre- and Post-Test sections of the surveys. A group session during the last workshop did yield activities from the workshops that youth considered their favorites (see Appendix.)

Implications For Further Research With Youth

Applications for further research include the necessity of having more than one researcher administer surveys in a group to help the youth with the surveys, and quite possibly using one-on-one interviews to ensure youth understand question content and to elicit further detail through open-ended questions. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, more data is needed so that adequate comparisons can be made regarding changes in the youth and perceptions of their families between the Pre- and the Post-tests. With further data, it may be possible to see if there are any correlations between the reported experiences and perceptions of youth and those of their parents that are also participating in the program.

Adults

A great class, very well done. I recommended it to other people.

The Building Strong Families program was well-liked, and adults in the class reported a very positive experience. They listed positive aspects of the class to be the particular presenter, topical information they learned in each workshop, the concurrent youth program, and the offering of an evening meal with the class.

The personality of the facilitator himself was an aspect of the workshops that contributed to the success of the Building Strong Families series. Without being specifically asked, the majority of the respondents made positive comments about the facilitator. First, he was instrumental in their participation, as several of them enrolled in the series as a result of their personal acquaintance with him. Secondly, they vividly recalled his manner of skillfully relating stories from his own childhood to illustrate class points. They described these narratives as helping them retain the information from the workshops, and recalled these lessons in their own parenting. The many comments respondents made about him made it clear that the facilitator was well-appreciated and approachable. As one respondent emphasized: *"I know where the facilitator works, and if I needed to call him (with a parenting issue), I wouldn't hesitate."*

Other aspects of the class that adults enjoyed was learning new ways of thinking about and working with their families. The fact that the youth program was offered at the same time, along with dinner, was particularly appreciated, so that they did not have to worry about making an evening meal and trying to get to the program, or finding someone to watch their children so that they could participate.

Even a year later during a follow-up telephone call, nearly every adult used the term “excited” to describe their anticipation of participating in the program. At this time adults were still very positive in describing the impacts of the program and specific changes they saw in themselves or in the way their families interacted.

The quantitative portion of the survey showed that the Building Strong Families program seemed to have an impact on how adults perceived their families in several areas. Areas that showed the most improvement were in “Managing Stress” and “Balancing Responsibilities,” which although initially rated the lowest among all areas of family life, showed the second and third highest amount of overall rating increase. The ratings for “Family Strengths” and “Kids and Self-Esteem” were higher from the Pre- to the Post-Test as well, with “Kids and Self-Esteem” showing the most increase in ratings over any other area. However, communication surrounding conflict resolution, as well as balancing responsibilities in terms of household tasks, seemed to be topics in which respondents related having the most difficulty, and that were the most appreciated of the workshops.

Respondents noted how much time they spent with their families in particular activities, and areas that showed overall increases in the adults’ indication of time spent were the following, with “Solving conflict in a positive way” showing the greatest amount of change:

- Solve conflict in a positive way
- Show caring and appreciation
- Encourage one another
- Spend meals together
- Talk with your family about fun things
- Have fun together
- My child thinks that I understand him.
- My child thinks that I listen to him

Balancing the responsibilities in a household was an area in which families seemed to have concern. Adults gave their families low marks on sections of the survey related to measuring how well their families worked to share responsibility and perform household tasks. Low scores in these areas on the Post-Test indicated that Balancing Responsibilities was an issue even at the completion of the program. Interestingly, “Balancing Responsibilities” was mentioned most often as the favorite workshop.

Subsequent sections of the survey showed that a few respondents, when asked to list characteristics of their children, listed many more positive characteristics than negative ones on the Post-Test than they did on the Pre-Test. Although just a couple individuals accounted for the change, the amount of change seemed striking, indicating that for these participants, the program resulted in more thoughtful appreciation of their children’s qualities. This thoughtfulness is borne

out in the qualitative sections of the surveys, which included open-ended questions on the written survey as well as a follow-up telephone survey.

While the quantitative part of the evaluation did show overall improvements in several areas the adults rated, it should be noted that this is based on a sample size of 9 (respondents that completed both the Pre- and Post-Test sections of the survey) and often only half of these accounted for the change. Such a small sample may not be considered statistically significant, although the qualitative portion of the survey which asked open-ended questions and the follow up survey by telephone, yielded rich data.

During the telephone conversation adults remarked about specific efforts they made with their families since beginning the program to spend more time with their children and to work on listening to their children to improve family communication. They listed aspects of the workshops that helped them the most as being the emphases on really listening to and communicating with, as well as valuing their children. Several mentioned the discussions revolving around working together. Some respondents alluded to newfound insight as to child development and how that affected their thinking about what to expect of their children. As a result, the most important changes the adults had seen in their families was that their families were doing better at helping out, communicating, and getting along together.

In all, the Building Strong Families program was a very positive experience for the adults, and they described many ways their participation had a positive impact on their families and children. (Two respondents said they didn't think the program had an impact on them, but explained that because of their age or background in the mental health field already working with children, they felt that they already had these skills). These adults shared information they learned in the program with friends and family and at least one recommended the program to others. Participants noted they used more positive discipline and better outcomes as a result of the program. An overarching theme of the statements the adults made was in voicing their desire to value their children and families more and their desire to have better relationships with them. In addition, one respondent noted that as a result of the program, he appreciated his wife even more. Another respondent remarked that now she appreciated her own mother more than she did before, and the efforts her mother had made for her family as she was growing up. Adults reiterated time and again that they had really come to value the importance of a strong family.

One respondent summed up the program:

If a couple could take these classes together, it would be wonderful.

Implications for Future Adult Programs and Research

Attempts to find respondents not at their original phone number through letters were ineffective. In the future, it might be helpful to ask participants for additional phone numbers from relatives or friends for making a follow-up call. This format allowed respondents to share rich insights about the program and allowed the researcher to clarify any comments. Respondents also had had a year in which to reflect on the program and to implement changes in their families.

Familiarity with and participation in the Building Strong Families program came through acquaintance with the presenter or partnering agencies, not through personal relationships with others before the class. In fact, one respondent, enthusiastic about what she had gained from the class, noted that it was difficult for her to suggest to her friends that they should take the class, because it seemed to insinuate to her friends that she thought her friend was a bad parent, when in fact it was the participant's general enthusiasm about the class, and not a judgment of her friend's parenting, that was the reason for her recommendation. For these reasons, marketing the program through partnering agencies in the future might continue to be the most effective way to involve participants.

Adults often had vivid memories of the workshop and how they used the information to improve the relationships in their own families. Several times, they mentioned how impactful they found the facilitator's use of personal examples from his own childhood to be in thinking of how to strengthen their own families. In future programs, the use of highly skilled facilitators will likely contribute to the success of and enthusiasm of the participants towards the program, and facilitators should be encouraged to share relevant and appropriate narratives from their personal experience.

Many respondents noted that a detractor to the program was participants who seemed to be there involuntarily were disruptive. They felt that separate sessions should be conducted for the participants they thought were there involuntarily to result in a more positive experience for those who had participated in the class of their own accord. Participants found hands-on activities, most notably the 'paper doll' activity, to be the most memorable, and also greatly appreciated the personalization of the program when the presenter used instances from his experience to illustrate the concept of the particular session. There were no other suggestions for improving the class.

While the quantitative sections of the survey seemed to show that families considered improvements in their families from the beginning of the program to the end, it was a very small amount of data. Collecting more data from other Building Strong Families workshops can help strengthen any research conclusions about the program.

The open-ended questions on the written survey and particularly the follow-up telephone survey provided a great deal of rich data. Even after a year since the end of the program, respondents were more than willing to take the time to participate in the telephone conversation, seemingly even before the incentive of a \$15 Wal-Mart gift certificate was mentioned as an added bonus. Their statements about the ways the program had helped them work with their families to improve their relationships were insightful and reflected very positively on the effectiveness of the Building Strong Families Program.

APPENDIX

While 11 youth began the Pre-Test, only 10 completed the majority of the questions on the Pre-Test. Only 4 of these same youth completed the Post-Test as well. (In actuality, 5 youth completed the Post-test, but because this youth did not complete the majority of the Pre-test, it was impossible to make a Pre- and Post-Test comparison of their responses.) Data for each Pre-Test will be provided in the Appendix for descriptive purposes, with a table following that shows the Pre- and Post-Test scores for only those 4 youth that completed both tests.

What adults in your life help take care of you?

Three youth responded to this question by listing “Mom” and “Dad” as their caretakers. Another youth listed “Mom,” “Dad,” in conjunction with “Foster Mom” and “Foster Dad.” One youth listed only one name, a foster parent. Yet another youth listed “Mom” along with the names of a couple that he indicated were foster parents, listing two more adults, for a total of five individuals that shared in his care.

What adults live in the house with you?

Three youth responded simply that “Mom” lives in the house with them, while a fourth youth indicated living with his Mom and brother. One youth listed his foster parents and then clarified that he used to live with his Mom and soon would live there again, with his Dad being his secondary home.

How do you expect that this program will help you? (This question was posed only on the Pre-Test):

Only three youth responded to this question with the following statements:

- *It could help me communicate with others.*
- *Get back to my mom that I love!*
- *Other people will know you better.*

How often do you spend time alone with an adult in your family?

Table 5A and 5B: Pre-Test Responses for How Often Youth Spend Time Alone with Adults in Family

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	4	3	2	0	0	1

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	1	0	2	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	1	1	1	0

*Youth marked both responses of “A Lot” and “Some.” These are non-duplicated numbers.

For students that took both Pre- and Post-Tests, for two, responses remained the same on both tests, but one respondent reported spending less time with family, with his response decreasing from “Some” to “None.”

How often does your family have fun together?

Table 6A and 6B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often the Family Has Fun Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	6	1	1	0	1	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	1	1	1	0	0

There was no difference from the pre to the Post-test in reported time spent by two youth who completed the question on both the Pre- and Post-Test. One youth reported spending “A Lot” of time having fun together on the Pre-Test, but indicated both “A Lot” and “Some” on the Post-Test.

How often does your family spend time together?

Table 7A and 7B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often the Family Spends Time Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	5	1	3	0	0	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	1	0	2	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	3	0	0	0

There was no difference from the pre to the Post-test in reported time spent by the three youth who provided responses on both tests.

How often does your family go places together?

Table 8A and 8B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often the Family Goes Places Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	6	1	2	0	0	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	2	1	0	0

Three youth marked the same response on both the Pre- and Post-Test. One youth responded “A Lot” on the Pre-Test, and indicated “A Little” on the Post-Test.

How often does your family celebrate traditions together?

Table 9A and 9B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often the Family Celebrates Traditions Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	6	1	1	1	0	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	3	0	0	0

From the Pre- to the Post-test, two of the youth who had reported they celebrate traditions with their family “a lot” replied “some” on the Post-test, while one youth who had reported “some” on the Pre-test” reported “a lot” on the Post-Test.

How often does your family eat together?

Table 10A and 10B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often the Family Eats Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	7	1	1	0	0	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	3	0	0	0

Of the three who completed the question on both the pre and Post-test questions, there was no change for two respondents, while one reported “a lot” on the Pre-test and “some” on the Post-test.

How often does your family work together?

Table 11A and 11B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Often The Family Works Together

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	5	1	2	0	1	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	1	0
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	3	0	0	0

Of the four who responded to the question on both the pre and post test one responded both times with “a lot” and one both times with “some”, while one changed his response from “a lot” to “some” from the Pre- to Post-test, and one from “none” to “a lot/some” on the Post-test.

Overall, how happy is your family?

Table 12A and 12B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Happy is the Family

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
# Responses	5	1	3	0	1	1

*One youth marked two responses to this question.

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot	A Lot/Some*	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	3	0	0	0	0	1

Of the three who completed the question on both the pre and post tests, two responded “a lot” on both tests, while one responded “some” on the Pre-Test and then “a lot” on the Post-test.

The adults I live with think I take this much responsibility around the house:

Table 13A and 13B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Youth Believe Adults Think About Youth Responsibility Levels Around the House

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	4	3	0	2	0	1

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	1	0	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	2	0	0	1	0	1

Of the three who completed responses on both the pre and post tests, two wrote that they take “a lot of responsibility” on both the pre and post tests, while one wrote “an amount that is fair” on the Pre-test and then wrote “a little” on the post test.

For my age, I take this much responsibility around the house:

Table 14A and 14B: Pre-Test Responses Rating Level of Responsibility Youths Report Taking Around the House

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	5	2	1	0	0	2

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	0	2	0	0	0	2
Post-Test # Responses	1	0	1	1	0	1

We share chores fairly at our house.

Table 15A and 15B: Pre-Test Responses Rating Youths Perception of Fairness of Family Chore Distribution

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some/A Little*	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	5	0	1	1	0	3

**Youth marked both "Some" and "A Little."*

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	A Lot of Responsibility	An Amount that is Fair	Some	A Little	None	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	1	0	0	1	0	2
Post-Test # Responses	3	1	1	0	0	0

One youth said he took "a lot of responsibility" both times, and another youth wrote "a little" on the Pre-test and then "a Lot of Responsibility: on the Post-test.

My family members listen to me.

Table 16A and 16B: Pre-Test Responses Rating Youth Perceptions of How Well Family Members Listen to Youth

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	5	1	4	0	0	0

**Youth marked both "Some" and "A Little."*

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	1	0	3	0	0	0
Post-Test # Responses	2	0	2	0	0	0

Two weren't sure, one strongly agreed, one went from "Not Sure" to "Strongly Agree."

My family members show that they care.

Table 17A and 17B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Well Youth Perceives Family Shows Caring

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	5	3	0	0	0	2

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	1	2	0	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	2	1	1	0	0	0

Of the youth who answered the question on both the pre and Post-Test, one indicated agree both times, one indicated "strongly agree," both times, and one went from "Agree" to "Not Sure."

I show my family members that I care about them.

Table 18A and 18B: Pre-Test Responses Rating How Youth Reports Showing Caring to Family Members

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	6	1	1	0	0	2

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	0	1	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	3	1	0	0	0	0

Of the three who completed the questions on both Pre- and Post- test, two indicated "strongly agree" both times, and one who had written "Not sure" on the Pre-Test responded with an "Agree" on the Post-Test.

I feel that there are some good things about me.

Table 19A and 19B: Pre-Test Responses Rating Youth’s Perception of Own Qualities

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	7	3	0	0	0	0

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	2	2	0	0	0	0
Post-Test # Responses	3	1	0	0	0	0

While the responses for three youth stayed the same, the response for one youth went from “Agree” on the Pre-Test to “Strongly Agree” on the Post-Test.

I feel that I am at least as good as most other people my age.

Table 20A and 20B: Pre-Test Responses Rating Youth’s Perception of Own Value in Relation to Others

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	4	0	4	0	0	2

Responses for Youth Taking Both Pre- and Post-Tests

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Pre-Test # Responses	0	0	3	0	0	1
Post-Test # Responses	3	0	1	0	0	0

Two that were not sure on the Pre-Test strongly Agreed on the post test.

Finally, youth were asked the open-ended question as part of a focus group wrap-up:

What was your favorite activity?

Youth listed these responses as follows:

- balloons
- paper airplanes
- helper hats
- readings
- changing the baby (from Balancing Responsibility)
- eating
- playing with pipe cleaners
- making things for parents