



# bulletin

## for Parent Educators



Strengthening Parent Education  
Across Canada

JUNE 2003

### Calling all Parent Educators!

Together, the Canadian Federation of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) and Family Service Canada – with funding from Health Canada – are initiating a project to increase capacity in the field by providing useful information and practical ideas in an accessible format.

This is the first issue of a Bulletin for Parent Educators. It will be published four times during the coming year and distributed to parent educators across Canada. Feel free to copy and share it with your colleagues.

We often hear parent educators express professional loneliness and a sense of isolation. We work in different types of organizations and many parent educators are working on a freelance and part-time basis. As well, there has been no one umbrella group or organization to help them connect. It's difficult to organize a group that doesn't have a strong self-identity.

Through this project we will hold community gatherings and share information about local, provincial and other associations that connect parent educators. As well, we will produce a Handbook for Parent Educators providing tips, tools and a catalogue of resource materials parent educators in Canada have found useful. If you would like to help us, please call or e-mail us, We welcome your ideas.

*Kathleen Stephenson*  
Family Service Canada  
(613) 722-9006  
[kstephenson@sympatico.ca](mailto:kstephenson@sympatico.ca)

*Janice MacAulay*  
FRP Canada  
(613) 237-7667 ext 223  
[macaulay@frp.ca](mailto:macaulay@frp.ca)

### Evaluating Parent Education Programs

Simple but systematic evaluation is an essential strategy for improving and strengthening parent education programs. Various tools and techniques can be used to gather information to pinpoint what works well and identify opportunities for enhancing participants' experience and learning.

Here is a dozen ideas and practical suggestions – some tried and true, some fresh – for implementing effective and useful program evaluation. The focus on improving and strengthening programs.

1. A simple, anonymous true and false or multiple choice quiz can do double duty as a needs assessment and evaluation tool. Invite parents to do the quiz before and after participating in the program and compare the results.
2. Remember that you are evaluating your program, not testing participants' level of knowledge or understanding. You don't need their names. You can develop a participant profile by including a few questions in your quiz or evaluation questionnaire about the ages of their children and their main parenting concerns.
3. As a closing exercise, ask participants to compose a brief letter to an appropriate recipient – perhaps their children, a family member, friend, or colleague – explaining their new insights and lessons learned. They may or may not choose to give the letter to the recipient. However, some participants may be willing to share their letters with you to provide feedback about what they have learned and consider important.
4. Ask young participants to draw a poster or post card to illustrate something important they have learned. Older participants might enjoy this too.
5. Ask participants if they would like to have a follow-up conversation two or three weeks after completion of the program – an opportunity for you to ask a question or two focused on their hoped-for learnings and invite suggestions for future workshops.
6. If the program lasts several weeks, during one of the last few sessions, post a series of questions on flip charts around your meeting room and invite teams of 2-3 participants to come up with group responses. Participants will enjoy the interaction, have fun and learn from each other. The responses will also provide a snapshot of what they have learned. Some sample questions:

(cont'd...)

- What is the most useful thing you have learned during the program?
  - Write a brief job description for a 2 year-old (or 10 year-old or teenager, etc.)?
  - How can you ensure good communications with a teenager?
7. As a closing exercise, invite participants to identify one lesson or “treasure” that they will take home with them and one misunderstanding or piece of “trash” that would like to put in the garbage can. (You can have a treasure chest and trash bin in the middle of the group.) Giving feedback verbally can be an effective closing exercise for any program or session. It does not have to be the final session.
  8. Remember that you are not conducting research. You are *gathering information* to help you assess whether your program is working and indicate opportunities for strengthening it. Choose strategies that reflect the adult education principles that guide the planning and design of effective parent education programs.
  9. There’s nothing like a straightforward question to participants. What did you learn? Has it been helpful? Using participants own words, record all ideas on flip charts. No need to comment or respond, just thank the participants for their input.
  10. Consider recruiting a researcher or evaluator who can provide advice in gathering and reviewing information. Volunteers might be available through a local chapter of the Canadian Evaluation Society.
  11. Once in a while, recruit your own focus group including colleagues, former participants, and other interested individuals to consider the overall feedback you have gathered and help develop recommendations for strengthening future family education programs.
  12. Keep the evaluation process simple and manageable but don’t ignore your need for feedback about the impact of your programs. Remember that the goal is to improve and enhance your programs not to judge or test the parents who are participating.

*Kathleen Stephenson  
Consultant, Family Service Canada*

Parenting stress was considered to be the primary issue facing parents and families in Canada by 92% of parent educators from across Canada who responded to a recent survey. Fully 68% of the 50 respondents indicated that family conflict and anger management are primary issues. The years of experience of the respondents ranged from 0 – 35 years with an average of over 11 years as parent educators.

## Certified Canadian Family Educator Program

### Promoting excellence in services and programs for families

In 1993, Family Service Canada introduced a certification program for family and parent educators. Successful candidates receive the designation: Certified Canadian Family Educator

The process includes peer review and assessment of documentation provided by candidates regarding their

- work experience as a family or parent educator
- demonstrated strengths across a spectrum of skills and knowledge
- academic qualifications
- commitment to continuous professional development

### What are the Benefits of Certification for Family Educators?

- Affirmation as an experienced, qualified and effective professional working in the field of family education in Canada
- Recognition through an objective and thorough process managed by Family Service Canada, a respected Canadian organization
- Acknowledgement of professional ethics, values and commitment to continuous learning
- Use of the CCFE designation in marketing and promotion
- Membership in a Canadian network of family educators
- Opportunities to share ideas, expertise and resource materials with members of the network
- Access to professional development initiatives offered by Family Service Canada and other partner organizations
- Invitations to attend national conferences and seminars with other professionals who have common interests and work in related fields.

Obtain more information and an application from from:

Family Service Canada  
404-383 Parkdale Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4R4  
(613) 722-9006; (613) 722-8610 (fax),  
info@familyservicecanada.org; www.familyservicecanada.org

“Parents who take a course or program led by a Certified Canadian Family Educator have assurance that the leader is skilled and knowledgeable and committed to maintaining high educational standards for effective group learning.”

—Maggie Fietz, President & CEO, Family Service Canada

