

MCFR

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

Family Forum

SPRING 2010

Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a state affiliate of the National Family Council on Relations



The Minnesota Council on Family Relations strengthens all families by educating and supporting family professionals and promoting connections among those involved in research, policy and practice.



Families and Innovation **NCFR 72nd Annual National Conference**

Minneapolis Hilton and Tower, Minneapolis, MN

Wednesday, November 3 through Saturday, November 6

MCFR Members Save Registration \$\$

Special Rates for MCFR members who attend

MCFR DAY at NCFR's National Conference:

Friday, November 5 for \$99! Attend Friday, *and* Saturday, November 6 for \$149

Student rates are \$49 for Friday, November 5, and \$75 for Friday and Saturday

The MCFR Board of Directors is excited that NCFR is collaborating to offer a special day on Friday, November 5 at the NCFR conference in Minneapolis -- especially for our members who are practitioners in the family field. Since we are the local affiliate of NCFR, it is a great, low-cost benefit to be able to attend part of a huge annual conference with presenters and participants from all over the U.S. (and the world!) The committee for MCFR Day at NCFR is gathering information about transportation and logistics, and hopes to help members with details. The day's schedule will be practitioner-oriented, and seasoned attendees will be available to help you make the most of your day. Please save the date and watch for more details about MCFR Day at NCFR events.

Mark Your Calendar for this Special Offer!

www.ncfr.org www.mcfr.net

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Join MCFR & Save Registration \$\$ Mark Your Calendar for this Special Offer!



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Family Forum Editor:

Ron Pitzer..... 612-331-1970

Family Forum Managing Editor:

Linda Vukelich..... 651-278-4241

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

2738 Evergreen Cir, St. Paul, MN 55110

phone: 651-407-0950 fax: 651-407-1754

www.mcfr.net

From the President Beth Yokom

Greetings MCFR Members,

It's summer! Surely a time, especially in Minnesota, to take brief (or extended, if you're lucky) respite from the daily crush of winter and work, breathe deeply of the fresh, green-scented air and re-center one's self. Can you tell what I'm longing and hoping for in the next few weeks?

Although the pace may slow a bit during the summer, your MCFR Board continues to work on several projects focused on fulfilling our mission to "strengthen all families by educating and supporting family professionals" (That's you!):

"Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators" workshops were held in four locations around the state, and were very well attended by a variety of professionals. Requests for more workshops are coming in, and we're making plans to offer additional sessions. Plus, we're busy developing a "Part 2" follow-up workshop, focused on implementing the ethical thinking process to resolve real life ethical issues faced by family professionals daily. Stay tuned...

MCFR Day at NCFR, Friday, Nov. 5, 2010, Minneapolis – Here's your chance to attend a national conference in your own backyard for a very reasonable fee! MCFR and NCFR collaborated closely to create this opportunity for you. More specific information about this event is in this issue of Family Forum or on our website, www.MCFR.net See you there!

Student/New Professional Section – We recently voted to expand the MCFR Student Section to include New Professionals as well. New professionals may now join MCFR at the student rate any time within one year of graduation. We are very proud of our SNP section, led by Alisha Hardman, for their commitment to MCFR and their dedicated work on finding ways to best meet the professional development needs of their fellow students/new professionals. Thank you, thank you.

Additional Board projects:

- Marketing Task Force
- Post-conference Public Policy Bulletins
- Website updates, enhancements and improvements
- Member listserv
- Family Forum publication 3 times/year

Whew! We are a busy Board and can use your help. If you, as an MCFR member, are interested in helping us out with any of the above projects, please contact me.

Also, we are currently accepting Board member nominations. Now's the time to nominate yourself or a colleague to join us. We're a dedicated, hard working bunch who also knows how to have fun and, sometimes, pause for a deep breath. Join us!

Please feel free to contact me at beth.yokom@anoka.k12.mn.us or 763-506-2461 with your ideas, questions and desire to be involved in MCFR.

Wishing you a wonderful summer filled with sun, fun and time to smell the roses!

Beth Yokom
MCFR President

Talking About the Family Field

Sue Meyers, Professor Emeritus, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota; MCFR Historian and Board member

Many of us have common experiences in learning about or teaching in the family field. It is likely that we are 6 degrees of separation from someone with a similar experience. If we pose sufficient questions, we may find these common experiences. I remember attending my first NCFR meeting and talking with people as we waited in line for breakfast. I found connections to colleagues through my various university experiences, through the discipline within the family field, and through current activities.

This summer, see if you can find links to MCFR or NCFR through vacations, library work, internships or general activities. As you are observing a family in the park, you may strike up a conversation about how supportive the parents are of antsy children. At the grocery store, you may provide understanding to a parent who has a child ready to take a nap. By providing positive reinforcement to the parent, you

may help him through an awkward public display. We can test out different phrases that might ease the situation. When the other person is grateful, we may find that common link to a book, course, or other friendly help.

Or, you may read an article that explained how significant some key concepts were to an individual. A number of years ago, a woman relayed a concept on appreciation that Ada Alden had presented in a public presentation, and this concept made a significant difference in acting upon her problem. It was exciting to read this in the [Pioneer Press](#), a public declaration of wise perspectives on the family. I was able to show this to Ada, so that she knew of the tribute given to her. Perhaps you may hear other tributes at weddings, anniversaries, or graduations.

Our questions might be about location (raised in Minnesota?), family history (sense of humor), or observations about cross-generational interaction (with multiple ages). We may learn from neighbors as children grow up in a neighborhood. Summer activities can also reflect experiences with the family in which we were raised.

When we feel comfortable about our approach to the family field, we are more likely to find common links to professional organizations – like MCFR and NCFR. The study of families and the subject matter of families are common to many of us. There are many others that would love to know more about the family field if they knew how to find the information.

May you find the joys of family in your own linkages to others. And have a great summer!

MCFR Board Nominations Sought

Beth Yokom, MCFR President

Dear MCFR Members,

The MCFR Board is currently accepting nominations for Board positions for 2011. Please consider nominating yourself or a fellow MCFR member interested in serving on the MCFR Board.

We are a hard working, dedicated and FUN group of people, passionate about our varied and very important work with and for families. Join us!

Please send nominee names and contact information to me. Thanks much!

A Note from the Editor:

I hope your summer brings you many of those “rare days” of which the poets speak and that you enjoy this issue of the newsletter. My thanks to all of the contributors who have prepared these items to inform and enlighten us.

Again, I encourage each of you to consider contributing to Family Forum by preparing a book review or a research article/brief or by submitting an item for “Members’ Corner” (our version of Letters to the Editor). If you have any suggestions for improvement of *Family Forum*, please let me know. Thank you.

Ron Pitzer

Family Forum editor

612-331-1970 rpitzer@umn.edu

Policy Committee Report

Carolyn Carr Latady, Retiring Policy Committee Chair; Family Support Advocate, Forest Lake Area Schools

Watch the MCFR website for a new Policy Action Bulletin based on the MCFR conference, *Reality Check: Work and Family in a 24/7 World*.

Policy Action Bulletins based on these past MCFR conference themes are available at: <http://www.mcfr.net/policy.htm>.

- Nature, Children and Families: A Necessary Connection
- Contemporary Families – Formation, Function and the Future
- Families, Health and Mental Health: Military Families
- Families, Health and Mental Health: Postpartum Depression

We are continuing to work on updating the policy pages on the MCFR website, <http://www.mcfr.net/policy.htm> and linking these pages to resources and information on the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) website, <http://www.ncfr.org/pubpol/index.asp>.

The MCFR Policy Committee always welcomes additional members. The Policy Committee will also be looking for a new Chairperson as of July 1, 2010. If you have an interest in joining this group and/or would like additional information, please contact Sharon Powell at sharonpowellon27th@gmail.com or 612-729-7459.

Membership Committee Report

Nancy Melquist, Membership Committee Chair

The newly formed MCFR marketing committee (membership and communication committees combined) are contemplating ways to provide improved communication to MCFR members (check-out the communications committee report), and additional strategies to increase MCFR membership.

The membership benefits listed in the MCFR brochure and web site include:

- Subscription to MCFR Family Forum
- Reduced registration fees for MCFR conferences
- Inclusion on MCFR listserv
- Opportunities for mentoring, interaction and involvement with other family professionals; resume-building opportunities through committee work
- Dues discounts for retirees and students

There are many more benefits of being an MCFR member and we'd like to hear from you!

Why are you a member of MCFR? What are the professional and personal benefits of being a member of MCFR? Please email your responses to nancy.melquist@mahtomedi.k12.mn.us. Responses will be posted in the next Family Forum. Don't forget - membership renewal time is September 1. Look for membership renewal information coming to you via email in the fall.

Communications Committee Report Peg Lindlof, Communications Committee Chair

This year MCFR's Communications Committee is focusing on improving the timeliness of information posted on the website and on increased use of the listserv. If you have not been receiving email messages from our listserv—look for (MCFR) in the subject line—please contact us to add your email address to this group. We also invite all members to share information or ask questions of other professionals. Post to the MCFR listserv at MCFR@lists.umn.edu.

Recently the Communications Committee and the Membership Committee met to discuss the role of each committee, where there is duplication of effort, and how the committees could work together. In the process, the members decided that there is overlap in the area of marketing, so a task force was formed to study the issues and come up with recommendations to the Board. Currently serving on this task force are San Ha, Mary Maher, Nancy Melquist, Leanne Sponsel, and myself. Watch for a notice about photo albums of MCFR events that will soon be posted on the website. Perhaps your photo will appear in one of the albums!

Student / New Professional Section News

Alisha M. Hardman, CFLE (Provisional), Chair, Student/New Professional Section

Student/New Professional Section Updates:

The MCFR Board has approved a change to the Student section. The title of the Student section will now be the Student/New Professional section. New Professionals are considered those who are within one year of graduation and will qualify for the student rate. Participation and involvement in the S/NP section will continue to be open to all members and non-members of MCFR.

The student/new professional section held our Spring event on Friday, April 30. Efforts focused on MCFR student involvement in the annual NCFR conference this fall. In particular, we spent our time considering ways to extend hospitality through planning activities for student and new professional attendees. The MCFR student section is in the process of planning a social event in downtown Minneapolis for students and new professionals who attend the conference. We are also developing a list of restaurants and local hangouts particularly targeted toward students and new professionals to distribute at the conference. Any individuals interested in being involved in the planning process please contact me!

We are continuing to look for innovative ways to increase membership and involvement of graduate and undergraduate students in MCFR. In particular, I would love to build and maintain partnerships with faculty within various programs and colleges. If you are a faculty member or instructor and would be willing to allow me to speak to your class about MCFR either this summer or in early fall please let me know.

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities:

Student/new professional members of MCFR are eligible for reduced rates to attend the MCFR day at NCFR's national conference. The conference rates for MCFR student/new professionals are \$49 for Friday, November 5, and \$75 for Friday *and* Saturday. These reduced rates apply only to student/new professionals with paid MCFR membership.

Mark your calendars! The fall student/new professional event will be held on Friday, September 24, 2010 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Wilder Foundation. The event will be a workshop designed to provide practical information concerning how to attend and present at a conference in preparation for the MCFR day at NCFR's national conference. More details still to come!



Reviewed by Ada Alden, MCFR Board Member and former MCFR President

Nurture Shock - New Thinking About Children Po Bronson & Ashley Merryman.

New York, NY: Twelve Hachette Book Group. 2009

Although some claim natural instinct will suffice when dealing with children, I have found the parent life journey challenging and life changing.

Parenting requires one to be intentional, focused and able to shift as children age and times change. Common sense is recommended and during times of stress, weariness and emotional upheaval common sense can be elusive. The authors of *Nurture Shock* are parents and award winning journalists. Numerous accolades and 60 pages of selected references and sources add to the credibility of the work. The discussions on praise, telling lies and playing well with others were of particular interest.

The Inverse Power of Praise

Parents have been encouraged to celebrate, praise and approve actions, attitudes and existence. Constant praise some say is “an angel on the shoulder.” Research studies support that children who have been constantly assured they are “so smart” are afraid to err, afraid to fail and may eventually become afraid to try. However, students who were praised **for effort** kept on keeping on. Children labeled as smart kids believe smart is enough. There is an inverse power of praise. Praise for specific actions is effective. Overall praise for everything leads to confusion and an inflated sense of self. It can also result in students only doing things when praised. A “praise junky” can resort to cheating to assure success is achieved. I watched parents at a soccer game after reading this section of the book. I heard parents calling “You are great!” “I am proud of you.” “Great play”. The children were five. Consistently judging and providing praise eventually erodes the child’s ability to determine for self if something had been accomplished well. Jumping in with parental praise takes away the opportunity for the child to self deduce or self evaluate. I am reminded of *The Little Engine That Could*. Remember “I think I can! I think I can!” Too much praise may diminish a determined attitude necessary for the long chug up the mountain.



Why Kids Lie

Children lie to prevent getting in trouble. Children lie when telling the truth is not welcomed. Children live in a culture where white lies are often the norm. It may be impolite to be truthful. I often hear distraught mothers tell eager first borns not to tattle on younger siblings. Bronson and Merryman point out that researchers have spent hours observing kids at play. They report that more often than not children who are “tattling” are telling the truth!. Researchers from the University of Minnesota admonish eloquently about the importance of bystanders speaking up and speaking out when observing abuse or violence. Being silent -- or not tattling, if you will-- gets in the way of social justice. “Don’t tattle” comments from parents is really saying don’t come to me with your problems. The data is disturbing. Studies show that 96% of kids lie to their parents, yet lying has never been the #1 topic on parenting boards or lists of concerns. Telling the truth is about courage, compassion and conscientious involvement. It is also rare.

Plays Well With Others

There has been much commentary on the connection between media, video games, violence and aggressive behavior. We have shelves of books and studies that compare and contrast physical aggression, relational aggression, and verbal aggression. The disturbing point in *Nurture Shock* for me was the confirming of scholars’ hypotheses that “the more educational media the children watched, the more relationally aggressive they were.” Children were more bossy, controlling and manipulative. Shows on PBS, Nickelodeon, and the Disney Channel rated fairly high in modeling relational aggression. A Minnesota study revealed that watching educational television also increased the rate of physical aggression almost as much as watching violent TV. An alarming quote from the book was, “*Arthur* is more dangerous for children than *Power Rangers*.” A group of undergrads at Ithaca studied 470 half-hour television programs. It was revealed that 96% of all children’s programming includes verbal insults and

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Book Review (Continued from page 6)

put down. "Of the 2,628 put-downs the team identified, in only 50 instances was the insulter reprimanded or corrected and not once in an educational show. Usually the put down was followed by laughter or silence. In my thinking, putdowns are located on a continuum that includes verbal abuse, bullying and cyber bullying. Living rooms, bedrooms, classrooms and playgrounds are environments in which rude, hurtful behavior permeates conversations, tweets and face book walls.

Nurture Shock includes chapters on parents discussing race, lack of sleep, sibling relationships, and self-control to name but a few. The topics are tough. The demand on parents is too. I do know the days go slowly and the years fly by. I do know children are watching. My daughter gave me a magnet that says the first 40 years of parenting are the toughest. That is shocking. The book has some nuggets worthy of reflection and action.

News from NCFR

Minnell Tralle, University of Minnesota Extension, NCFR Representative & NCFR Affiliate Councils President-Elect, Former MCFR President

As I write this I am preparing to attend the NCFR Board of Directors' retreat in Chapel Hill, NC. Our NCFR President, Gary Bowen has set a goal for the board to focus on *member engagement* as the topic of our upcoming retreat. As I think about this upcoming discussion, I wonder, what does it take for you as a member to become more engaged in your professional organization? What can your board do to provide value to you as a member? What are our strengths as a member organization? Are there members who are disenfranchised? How would you respond to those questions either as a member of MCFR or NCFR? The NCFR Board will be spending 3 days pondering these questions and identifying specific outcomes for the next 3 years. I plan to share these ideas and plans in future issues of the Forum.

NCFR sees the most engagement of members at the annual conference. With the conference in Minneapolis this year, it is much more convenient for us all to attend. Want to get a taste of what NCFR has to offer? Attend the MCFR day at the special rate. Want a full course meal of the NCFR conference? Come for the whole conference and see the buffet of offerings for researchers and practitioners. The workshops, special sessions, and poster sessions have all been decided. I'm excited about the "Fireside Chat with Glen Elder", "Do Children Need Both a Mother and a Father?," "Families and Social Media", and the multitude of poster sessions and paper presentations. Check out the website for the full schedule at www.ncfr.org to see what excites you.

Why do people attend the NCFR conference? Some members indicated that among the reasons they attend are to "strengthen my skills as a family professional", "leadership opportunities", "networking", "encouragement to meet my professional goals", "current research", "motivation", and "meeting leading experts and practitioners", and last but not least, "friendships". There must be a reason in there for you!

Treasurer's Corner

By Heather Cline, Treasurer

As you may have noticed, MCFR has been doing things a bit differently in 2010. The decision to offer ethical training workshops in lieu of our traditional spring conference has turned into a smart investment and useful endeavor. From January to April the ethics workshops have contributed \$3,570 in income for MCFR, which is \$2,820 higher than budgeted for the entire year. Our balance as of 4/30/10 is \$9,721.69. This number may appear low in comparison to our 2009 year-end account balance of \$13,670.80. However, with many of the December 2009 conferences expenses processed in January, MCFR's finances continue to follow an expected pattern that foreshadows a steady balance increase throughout the year. For much of 2010, income has exceeded expenses thanks to income from Ethics workshops, Ethics booklets, and membership with minimal expenses. MCFR hopes to stay in the green for the remainder of 2010 by continuing to respond to the demand for Ethics workshops and booklets, your renewed commitment to this professional organization in the fall, and an innovative collaboration with NCFR during their annual conference in November.

Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators

Rose Allen, Workshops Coordinator

This spring, MCFR took our professional development efforts to different parts of our state. We offered a half day workshop on *Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators* in four Minnesota Communities - Mahtomedi, Rochester, St. Cloud and Moorhead. These sessions reached 113 participants.

Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of those registered were not MCFR or MNAFEE members - helping MCFR reach out not only geographically, but to a variety of disciplines.

The three hour workshops were taught by a team of MCFR members who received training in the content. Thanks to Betty Cooke and Ada Alden for providing the train the trainer session and to Mary Maher, Beth Yokom, Leanne Sponsel, Glen Palm, San Ha, Nicole Rice, Monica Potter, Dawn Cassidy and Sharon Powell for presenting the four sessions.

Participants indicated that the workshop was relevant and valuable in their work with families. Here is what a few of the participants shared on the evaluations:

(I liked)

- How interesting and relevant to my work the workshop was- how fast the time went.

- The application of the process in small groups - very helpful

(I will)

- Make use of the principles and combine them with social work ethics to help determine actions
- I will be doing a short information summary for my fellow ECSE classmates. We look at many scenarios as we prepare for home visiting!!!

(I was surprised by)

- The variety of professions who attended. Ethics is an important & interesting part of our work and lives!
- The clarity of the process - making ethics issues understandable.
- Plans are currently being made to offer additional three hour regional workshops in the fall of 2010.

Many participants expressed a need to spend more time working through the real life ethical dilemmas they face in their work. We are currently discussing the potential of offering a full day workshop on December 3, 2010. More information will be available soon.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR MCFR'S AWARDS

Leanne Sponsel, President-elect, Chair, Awards Committee

Each year MCFR members and leadership have the honor of presenting two awards.

The Ruth Hathaway Jewson Distinguished Service to Families Award is presented to a professional in the family field who is being recognized for her or his outstanding contribution on behalf of families. This recipient has made an outstanding contribution through service, research, and/or education, and typically has done so over time.

An individual or an organization who works outside of the family field yet has made significant contributions to the quality of family life in Minnesota can be nominated for the **Friend of the Family Award**. MCFR recognizes that families are affected by a multitude of professional fields and wants to acknowledge others' impacts.

There are many worthy candidates - help us select people for consideration for these two awards.

For information on how to nominate someone or to receive a nomination form, contact Linda Vukelich (l.vukelich@comcast.net; 651-407-0950).

Reflections About My Research Experience in 2009

By Peg Lindlof, M.S., CFLE, LPE

Starting a graduate program in 2007 after more than 40 years as an educator and family practitioner was both challenging and invigorating. One of the areas that I learned a great deal about was research methods and analysis. When it was time to choose my own research topic, it was not as easy as I initially thought it would be. As I explored the literature on topics of interest to me, it seemed I was drawn to topics where few studies had been done. That didn't stop me at first because I was passionate about these topics and excited about working in a new area. In the long run, it probably made the process more difficult, but it was an excellent way to learn more about the research process.

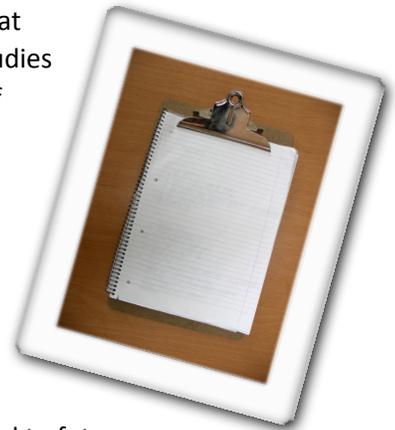
Since I have been involved with the Working Family Resource Center (WFRC) since it was founded in 1986 as a parent educator and coordinator, I wanted my research to benefit this organization. When I talked with Marcie Brooke, then the Executive Director of WFRC, about my ideas for this research, I asked her what she would most like to find out about. She said that WFRC staff would like to know if “providing parenting classes at the worksite, with



information provided for the parents and their child's caregivers, helps children to be more ready for success in school.” Further discussions with Marcie

and Beth Quist, then Director of Education and now the Executive Director, brought out other important concepts to study such as “Family Life Education (FLE) influencing better parental decisions that improve children's health”, “showing whether parent education at the worksite increases employee resilience”, or “studying how FLE at the worksite mitigates the effect of work to home and/or home to work spillover.”

It was clear to me that any of these research studies were beyond the level of the Plan B thesis for my M.S. program in Family Studies and Human Development at the University of Wisconsin-Stout!



Where could I start with something smaller that could potentially lead to future important research? Marcie and I met with Ellen Shelton and Greg Owen at Wilder Research, who had been working with WFRC to help with the conundrum of providing numbers-based evidence of the value of FLE at the worksite in order to convince businesses it was cost-effective. Through discussion with them, the idea surfaced that a place to start would be to study the implementation of one collaborative effort to provide FLE at the worksite.

Thus, the title of my study emerged: **“Implementing Parent and Family Education Delivery in Rural and Urban Minnesota Through Webinars: An Exploratory Study.”** The collaboration I would study had already begun between WFRC and the Southwest Area Initiative Foundation (SWIF). Marcie and Sara Carlson, Program Officer at SWIF, had been talking for several years about different ways to work together. In early 2009, WFRC discussed different options with SWIF and decided that webinar delivery of parent and family education was the most viable option. Through collaboration and a small grant from the Foundation, WFRC was able to provide these services in southwest Minnesota.

A majority of parents are working outside the home, but all parents are working parents—even though some don't receive a regular paycheck. Family life education (FLE) that takes place where people work seems to make a lot of sense. Working parents are already there, and they usually experience fewer distractions than when

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they are at home. They are often reluctant to take more time away from their families to attend evening FLE in the community. Working Family Resource Center has been bringing FLE to the worksite for over 23 years, and the WFRC staff has looked for ways to show that parent and family life education helps a business improve its bottom line.

Intuitively and anecdotally, it's clear that FLE at the worksite makes a difference, especially when looked at from the standpoint of how it affects the whole bottom line of society. Issues such as obesity, pollution, overconsumption, child abuse, and financial literacy can be addressed, and often changed, through education and support.

WFRC has staunch supporters—parents who say that the FLE classes were one of the best things that ever happened to their family, and business leaders who acknowledge that it has helped them retain employees, save costs, and improve productivity.



However, most businesses insist on quantitative evidence, and WFRC has not been able to find any studies on this topic that verify what staff and instructors believe from experience.

With all of the quantitative and qualitative research that has been done about parent and family education for years, one wonders why there are so few research studies in the area of FLE at the worksite. Several reasons seem clear. The most obvious is that it's very difficult to design a study that the research community would consider rigorous and valid and that a business would allow to be done with their employees. Restrictions related to security and privacy, along with concerns about the company's reputation, make this extremely difficult to accomplish.

Another underlying factor according to Marcie Brooke, is that “parent education is not seen as something that needs to be done in our society.” Even

though all parents are working parents, they don't need continuing education credits and it doesn't advance their income to take a parenting class. Most in our society believe that when parents have a child, they will figure it out, learn as they go, get tips from their childbirth class, follow what their faith tradition trains them to do, or ask questions of their doctor. Today, in addition, many young parents seek information and “quick fixes” from internet sources. Trained family life educators know that some of these sources provide research-based information, but many do not.



Family life educators at WFRC are passionate about the value of providing FLE at the worksite, and they customize it to fit the standards and restrictions of any particular work environment. There is also an emphasis on family life education for everyone, and topics from “the cradle to the grave.”

Most recently, this education has been provided through webinars.

This study examined and followed one organization's attempt to reach parents of young children—especially from underserved populations—and described the process of implementing parent and family life webinars and the

potential benefits they can provide to children and families.

Webinars have been used in business during the last ten years for meetings, training and professional development, primarily to save time, to reduce travel costs and to facilitate communication and training in remote areas (Workman and Koch, 2005, Krause, 2005). In a webinar, each participant sits at his or her computer—in any convenient location—and is connected to the



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instructor and to other participants via the internet. In some cases a group of people gather in a conference room at their place of work or in a community setting to participate together. WFRC started using webinars in 2007 to extend the geographic reach of its parent and family life education seminars, and to provide a time-efficient alternative seminar format for employees in industries such as law, accounting, and banking.

Multiple needs assessments in greater Minnesota have shown that distances between small towns and the lack of public transportation pose significant barriers for rural residents who wish to access community resources. This would include parents who might otherwise participate in parent and family life education. There are likely other complex societal, economic and personal reasons for this disparity, as well. The implementation of one possible solution, interactive computer-based webinars to deliver parent and family life education, could help to address this problem.

The primary purpose of my study was to observe and document the implementation of parent and family education webinars in the southwest area of Minnesota facilitated through a service provider (WFRC) in collaboration with a funding agency (SWIF).

My mixed-methods study explored and documented the planning and implementation of FLE delivery in southwestern MN through webinars originating from

WFRC in St. Paul. By carefully looking at the process from the vantage points of the funder, the service provider, instructors, and participants, my hypothesis was that it would help to advance the work that was already being done, contribute to bringing FLE to more people in Greater Minnesota, and promote a method that would increase parent education at the worksite. I also hoped that it would inspire other research on FLE at the worksite.



As I reflect on my research experience, I realize that the process taught me that good research does not happen quickly. It is complex and time-consuming, and is built on the foundations laid by previous researchers. As a neophyte and a veteran practitioner, I had grand ideas. Through the advice and patience of my adviser and others, I learned that what I thought I could accomplish needed to be pared down a great deal. I have immense respect for the work done by researchers, especially when I read their journal articles. **I also realize that I am a practitioner at heart!**

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