

Title:STATE'S COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING HIGHLIGHT PARENTING EDUCATION, GOV. INSLEE ISSUES PROCLAMATION

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Full Text:

OLYMPIA, WA -- The following information was released by the Washington State Department of Early Learning:

Parents are children's first and most important teachers. However, parenthood doesn't come with a training manual.

So who teaches parents and caregivers? Washington's parenting education programs offered at 20 community and technical colleges across the state.

To mark the 75th anniversary of parenting education programs in Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee issued a proclamation declaring Nov. 18-22 Parenting Education Week.

"People don't think twice about taking classes to learn a trade, improve computer skills, musical talents, or cooking abilities," said Barbara Smith, Skagit Valley College family life coordinator, parent educator, and Organization of Parenting Education Programs president. "But somehow, in our culture, parents think attending a parenting class might imply they are not good caregivers."

"Parenting engagement is a core component of our state's quality early learning programs," said Dr. Bette Hyde, Washington State Department of Early Learning director. "Children are born learning, so it's critical to help parents to access parenting education and information."

Extensive research shows the first five years of life greatly influence one's eventual self-concept, ability to trust and relate to others, healthy brain development, and success in school. Parents who learn about child development, family relationships, safety, and nutrition help their children have better success rates in elementary and middle school, according to Smith.

In Washington, 840,845 households include one or more family members under age 18, according to the U.S. Census. Here are just a few reasons nearly 11,000 parents/caregivers participated in parenting education classes and programs statewide last year:

**Information and Resources:** Parenting education courses provide parents with new knowledge and skills emphasizing the latest research and best practices in the field. Parents and caregivers can ask questions in a safe setting. They can explore and choose appropriate methods that work for their family situation or stage of their child's life.

**Confidence:** Whether parenting a newborn, adopted child, blended family, adolescent or teen, parenting classes can help you become a more confident caregiver. With a variety of tools and solutions at their disposal, parents are able to better manage new circumstances and every day challenges of raising healthy children.

**Friendship:** The opportunity to socialize, support, and problem-solve with other parents can help combat the isolation and loneliness of parenting.

Parenting education classes aren't limited to parents of infants and toddlers, but also include classes for single parents, teen fathers, blended families, grandparents as primary caregivers, high-risk (recovery, divorce, teen parents) families, and more.

Classes are offered through 20 of the state's 34 community and technical colleges, at churches and community centers, Head Start and ECEAP centers, housing developments, as well as public, private, and Tribal schools.

**Resources:**

Organization of Parenting Education Programs (Washington Community and Technical Colleges)

Love. Talk. Play.

Strengthening Families Washington

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is led by a Governor-appointed board and provides leadership, advocacy, and coordination for Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Each year, nearly 500,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education. Contact: Laura McDowell, 360-704-4310 or [lmcdowell@sbctc.edu](mailto:lmcdowell@sbctc.edu)

The Department of Early Learning was created in 2006 to help to help create safe, healthy, nurturing learning experiences for all Washington children. DEL oversees the state-funded preschool program, child care licensing, early intervention services, Washington's child care quality rating and improvement system, Strengthening Families Washington and other initiatives and programs to support parents as children's first and most important teachers.

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