

Community Education from a
Family Systems Approach:

Results from Short Lesson Formats



Prepared by Charlotte Shoup Olsen
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Overview

Each year, K-State Research and Extension offers the *Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Annual Lesson Series*, a community informal educational resource, on specific content areas that can improve the well-being of families and communities. A lesson can be a precursor to a more in-depth curriculum that the author plans to produce or the lesson's purpose may be primarily to create awareness about a certain topic. The lesson series are used by both Extension field faculty in numerous settings and the Kansas Association of Family and Community Education (KAFCS). Each lesson has a fact sheet with a few key concepts and references that can be given to lesson participants or distributed without a lesson such as at community resource fairs. The leader's guide assists the educator or community volunteer in presenting the information by including lesson objectives, preparation needed to present the lesson, suggested delivery methods, community awareness activities, and a brief evaluation instrument with instructions for sending completed evaluations to the lesson's author. The author also is expected to give training to Extension agents and KAFCS reps to increase their delivery effectiveness and competence in understanding the subject matter content.

What short format lessons have been offered to communities in the family systems area of programming that includes marital and family relations, farm families working together, and families across cultures?

Building Bridges Within Our Communities coauthored with Carol Young

PeopleTALK: Enhancing Your Relationships

*Paraguay: Heartland of South America**

What Happens Now? The Children Are Gone coauthored with John Merritt

Grandparents Forever

Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies

Raise A Reader adapted from existing materials

* This lesson with an accompanying DVD was not officially part of the FCS Annual Series, but was distributed in the same format.

What is the purpose of *Building Bridges Within Our Communities*?

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2722.pdf> leader's guide

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2731.pdf> handout

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2722a.pdf> evaluation instrument

The lesson and handout are intended to assist participants in becoming more aware of personal stereotypes and how to reduce them as a step to living more harmoniously in communities with families of different backgrounds. In addition, suggested discussion questions can help groups think about personal and group behaviors and activities for building bridges among families within a community. This lesson helps to set the stage for the community adoption of a more in-depth strong Latino marriage and family curriculum that is currently being written.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

The following questions and participant responses from throughout the state were used to measure the lesson's effectiveness.

How useful is the program to you?

5 Very Helpful	4	3	2	1 Not Helpful
109 (36.3%)	125 (41.7%)	62 (20.7%)	3 (1.0%)	1 (0.3%)

Did you learn or review some useful ways to become more aware of stereotypes and how to reduce them?

Yes 270 (98%)	No 6 (2%)
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This lesson made me think about stereotypes and discrimination in my community or involving my family, both past and present.

5 Very Helpful	4	3	2	1 Not Helpful
108 (35%)	134 (43.4%)	59 (19.1%)	6 (1.9%)	2(0.6%)

This lesson gave me ideas on how a person or a group might respond to building bridges in our community when stereotypes or discrimination are evident.

5 Very Helpful	4	3	2	1 Not Helpful
79 (27.1%)	116 (41.7%)	79 (27.1%)	16 (5.4%)	1 (0.3%)

What are some opportunities for building bridges within your community?

Participants reported the following categories of opportunities in which they planned to be involved:

- Volunteer at schools, soup kitchens, and rest homes
- Encourage intergenerational activities within the community
- Promote neighborhood gatherings and one-on-one encounters
- Be caring in attitude and behaviors
- Meet to respectfully air differences including the enforcement of existing laws
- Share food and cultural stories
- Start conversational Spanish classes
- Volunteer to tutor English
- Use church, school, and community groups for intercultural activities

What is the purpose of *PeopleTALK: Enhancing Your Relationships*?

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2652.pdf> leader's guide

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2651.pdf> fact sheet

This lesson and fact sheet are designed to make adult audiences become more aware of communication dynamics that can help or hinder a relationship, whether it be with friends, coworkers, spouse/partner, or others important to an individual. The information

is intended to augment *CoupleTALK* concepts with more recent relationship research findings.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

The following questions and participant responses from throughout the state were used to measure the lesson’s effectiveness:

How do you rate this lesson?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	No Opinion
224 (56.8%)	156 (39.5%)	14 (3.5%)	1 (0.2%)	0

What did you learn that surprised you?

The most frequent categories mentioned were:

- 5 positive interactions to one negative interaction for good relationships.
- Use timeouts to relieve stress during conflict – takes body 20 minutes to cool down if you don’t think negative thoughts
- Avoid using the word ‘you’ in a blaming way during conflict
- Pay attention to your communication and show fondness and admiration to those that are important to you
- Good reminders of things I had learned before.

Do you think this information will be useful to you in your own life? If yes, how?

Yes	No
356 (95.7%)	16 (4.3%)

Personal behaviors most likely to be impacted by the lesson were:

- Learn to listen and not jump to conclusions or interrupt.
- Raise awareness of importance of interacting with others around me
- Dealing with sibling conflict.
- To facilitate healthy, positive relationships.
- Working on 5 positive interactions to 1 negative one.
- Open, better communication.
- Rethinking disagreements from both sides.
- Be considerate and respectful to others.
- Bring up issues softly.
- Relax and don’t get too uptight.
- It will make me think a little more.
- Good reminder of how important friends are.
- I can use it during arguments.
- It will help me talk to my mom.
- Good family info – will use with my husband..
- By giving me pause to think about the information.
- Can pass on to my children

What other comments do you have about the lesson?

58 persons responded with compliments about the lesson material and how it was presented. No negative comments were listed.

What is the purpose of *Paraguay: Heartland of South America*?

This teaching guide accompanies a video/DVD and traveling suitcase of Paraguayan artifacts that is intended to help Kansans develop a cultural awareness of Paraguayan families and their environment and to identify similarities and differences between Paraguay and Kansas. Kansas and Paraguay are linked together through the national nonprofit volunteer organization, Partners of the Americas (POA), that promotes economic and social development in the western hemisphere. This project was completed through a Kellogg International Fellowship in community development coordinated by Partners of the Americas.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

Public school teachers have been the persons who most frequently have requested the traveling exhibit, video/DVD, and teaching guide. It also has been used with community groups on a more limited basis - no data are available as the survey forms were not returned by the requestees. Nevertheless, informal verbal feedback has consistently been positive on the lesson's effectiveness in building awareness about families across cultures, specifically related to Paraguay.

What is the purpose of *What Happens Now? The Children Are Gone*?

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2553.pdf> leader's guide

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2554.pdf> fact sheet

This lesson allows participants to examine personal, marital and professional issues during the stage of life when children have grown and left home. Ways in overcoming the stage's risks and capitalize on the opportunities are emphasized. The lesson supplements *CoupleTALK* by addressing the typical concerns of a specific developmental stage of family life.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

How useful is the lesson to you?

5 Very Helpful	4	3	2	1 Not Helpful
52 (18.6%)	100 (35.7%)	91 (32.5%)	36 (12.9%)	1 (0.3%)

Which part was most useful to you?

- Helping me to accept change as a normal part of life
- Hear how others deal with this situation

- Become aware of opportunities and risks
- Understand possible changes in roles/marital issues
- Reminding us to help others recognize this transition stage of life and help them examine their options and opportunities.
- Discussion about scenarios
- Information to share with other family

Which groups do you expect to share some of today's information (check all that apply)?

Group	No. of responses
Adult children	152
Parents	35
Spouse	103
Extended family	65
Community	98

What is the purpose of *Grandparents Forever*?

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/MF2416.pdf> leader's guide

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/MF2417.pdf> fact sheet

Grandparents are given the opportunity to help identify: 1) possible effects upon grandparenting if their adult child divorces, and 2) ways to cope with the divorce. Participants are encouraged to think of ways of supporting families experiencing divorce. This lesson is a supplement to the program geared to parents, *Family Change: Separation and Divorce*.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

Did you learn or review some useful ideas on how grandparents can relate to grandchildren?

Yes	No
387 (96.5%)	14 (3.5%)

Did you learn or review some useful ways in which grandparents can cope with divorce in their family? If yes, what information was the most useful?

Yes	No
356 (92.0%)	31 (8.0%)

The major ideas that were shared are:

- Keep communication going and keep in touch.
- Show love and compassion to all.
- Don't criticize either parent to the grandchildren.
- Remain neutral on parents' issues.
- Lend a listening ear but don't take sides.

- Innovative ways to maintain communication with grandkids (i.e. record messages).
- Treat everyone as you would like to be treated in similar situations.
- Who's boss. Parents or grandparents. Need to let parents be the parent.
- Taking a back seat and yet be there for support.
- Find someone to talk to or organize a support group.
- Dealing with the anger and grief.
- Be tolerant. Give them understanding—not lots of gifts.
- Be there for the grandchildren.
- Learning about Kansas laws and visitation.
- Stay in touch with ex- son or daughter-in-law.
- Be flexible.
- I had already learned most of these things since the divorce in our family was 10 years ago. Staying neutral most important.
- Listen rather than trying to give advice

Did you learn or review creative ideas on how you and other community members can be supportive to families experiencing divorce? If yes, what will you or your group plan to do as a result of today's discussion?

Yes	No
269 (77.0%)	80 (23.0%)

- Give time for respite for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Lend a listening ear but don't take sides.
- Be supportive of divorced families and children.
- Be more friendly with the divorced party in the community.
- Share ideas with others in the same situation.
- Work on establishing support groups!
- Put books in library or Extension office.
- Order book about state laws.
- Help churches be more supportive of both divorced people.
- Order video "Kids 4 Character" to put in local library.
- Pass out these handouts to friends and family.
- Be more careful of what I say—don't gossip.
- Babysit to hold down the time/stress element.
- Do things with children—any child who needs a grandparent.
- What I can do for single parents at my church.
- Attend ballgames, attend scout meetings and tell what we are doing or have done or share a hobby.
- Be willing to volunteer your time.
- It is a touchy situation and one that is private for involved people.

Will you teach or tell other people any of the information you learned from this lesson? If yes, who?

Yes	No
294 (83.1%)	60 (16.9%)

Share lesson with:	No. of responses
Community organization	86
Family	189
Friends	172
Other	17

What is the purpose of *Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies*?

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2232.pdf> leader’s guide

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2238j.pdf> fact sheet for parents

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2238k.pdf> fact sheet for grandparents

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2238l.pdf> financial and legal fact sheet

This program is designed for helping adults living in a stepfamily with children under age 18 understand and effectively respond to the challenges and realities common to many stepfamilies. This short format lesson covers key concepts of stepfamily living covered in the more extensive home study program. The video/DVD created for the program can be used with this lesson.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

Did you learn more about the differences between stepfamilies and first-time married families?

Yes	No
586 (91.0%)	58 (9.0%)

Did you learn or review some useful ideas for living in a stepfamily?

Yes	No
618 (96.0%)	26 (4.0%)

Did you learn or review ways of which others can be of support to stepfamilies?

Yes	No
618 (96.0%)	26 (4.0%)

Will you teach or tell other people any of the information or principles you learned from this lesson?

Yes	No
554 (86.0%)	90 (14.0%)

If you are a member of a stepfamily, what information from this lesson was of the greatest value to you? Answers most frequently given are categorized below.

- Help with understanding the multiple challenges of stepfamilies
- Time and patience is essential for a successful stepfamily.
- Well prepared and appropriate information for today's families.
- Will pass on to a teacher relative who comes in contact with many stepfamilies.
- It is hard to treat all grandchildren and stepgrandchildren alike, but, in time, one learns to make all of them feel part of the family.
- Awareness of the legal information.
- Excellent lesson.
- What persons need to know to become better stepparents.
- The information normalizes personal experiences.
- Helps others in community think how they can be supportive of stepfamilies.
- Everything on the handouts.

What was the purpose of *Raise A Reader*?

This lesson helps parents become aware of activities that will build literacy skills while raising young children. Information was adapted from existing materials through the Kansas Association for Family and Community Education.

How did participants respond to the objectives of this lesson?

The Raise-A-Reader lesson was informative.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
252 (61.6%)	154 (37.7%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)

The lesson was well presented.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
283 (67.9%)	134 (32.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

The handouts will be helpful.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
165 (42.0%)	216 (55.5%)	4 (1.0%)	1 (0.2%)	7 (1.8%)

I will be more likely to read to young children in my family.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
147 (39.5%)	202 (54.3%)	6 (1.6%)	1 (0.2%)	16 (4.3%)

I will use suggestions from this lesson when selecting children's books.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
172 (43.3%)	202 (50.9%)	4 (1.0%)	1 (0.2%)	18 (4.5%)

I am interested in participating in a Raise-A-Reader community project.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
83 (25.3%)	150 (45.9%)	9 (2.8%)	8 (2.4%)	77 (23.5%)

Summary

These short format lessons have reached at least 2,500 Kansas residents in direct lesson-specific instruction by trained Extension agents and community volunteers from the Kansas Association for Family and Community Education. In compiling the responses related to helpfulness and educational value of the lessons, 2,177 or 89.6 percent indicated either 5 (very helpful or excellent), 4 (helpful or good), or ‘yes’ in a yes/no option question. Measuring definite behavioral change as a result of a one hour lesson is impossible; however, several survey questions were intended to measure the possibility of future actions as a result of learning the information (i.e. sharing information with others, changing personal interactions with others, helping others in own family and community, etc.). Out of 2,511 who answered those questions, 2,226 or 88.6 percent indicated that they were prepared to take some type of action as a result of the lesson.

The anecdotal comments were qualitatively summarized to reflect the most consistent responses. These categories consistently showed encouraging results of the lesson’s effectiveness in content and presentation. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the respondents to indicate that the lessons were well written and in a way that encouraged group discussion and interaction, thus, helping the participants gain greater understanding about local family and community issues related to the topic.

What is not measurable are the ways that the information has been used in other settings rather than in specific lesson instruction. For example, the *Building Bridges* information has been used in a training titled “Rural Community and Culture” for K-State first year veterinary students who have obligated themselves to serve rural farm families and communities upon graduation. *PeopleTALK* is consistently incorporated into farm family communication training and was recently adapted to a high school senior fair on relationship building. Several of the lessons have been used as workshops in community Parent Universities over the years. Handouts are commonly provided at parent resource fairs. Overall, Extension agents and other community professionals have informally indicated that these one hour lesson formats are very helpful and lend themselves to multiple educational uses in marital and family relations, farm families working together, and families across cultures.