Center for Health & Safety Culture

www.chsculture.org

2019 Montana Parent Survey
Key Findings Report

Prepared for the

Montana State Department of Public Health and Human Services

Early Childhood and Family Support Division

January 31, 2020

Recommended Citation:

Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2020). *2019 Montana Parent Survey Key Findings Report,* Bozeman, MT: Montana State University.

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
Early Childhood and Family Support Division
1625 11th Street, USD&G Building
Helena, MT 59620
Phone: (866) 239-0458
https://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare

Center for Health and Safety Culture
Montana State University
P.O. Box 170548
Bozeman, MT 59717-0548
(406) 994-7873

Table of Contents

Survey Background and Methodology

The Center for Health and Safety Culture developed this survey to explore basic beliefs of parents, their self-reported social and emotional skills in the context of parenting, and their prioritization of potential topics to address on ParentingMontana.org.

Respondents were recruited using a contracted service (provided by Qualtrics) between September 25 and October 17, 2019. In total, 420 adults qualified and responded to the survey. To qualify, respondents had to live in Montana and have at least one child under the age of 18. The final sample included individuals with an average age of 36 years (standard deviation of 8.5 years); 69% were female; 8% were Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino; 89% were white; 4% were African American; 9% were American Indian or Alaska Native; and most had a high school degree or more education (25% high school or less; 31% some college; 30% college graduate; and 9% post-graduate degree). Ages of their children varied: 25% had children ages birth to 2; 25% had children ages 3 to 4; 63% had children ages 5 to 11; and 43% had children ages 12 to 17. Because the sample was not randomly selected, the results are not necessarily generalizable to all parents or adults in Montana.

Skills That Lead to Success

The survey asked respondents to list three skills a parent (or any adult in a parenting role) should have to be successful and three skills a child should have to be successful in life. The top five parenting skills were patience, love, understanding, listening, and empathy. The top five child skills were listening, learning, patience, respect, and communication. Figures 1 and 2 are "word clouds" summarizing the results.

A review of all the skills revealed that 93% of the skills identified for a parent to be successful were social and emotional skills. Similarly, 92% of skills parents identified their child needs to be successful were social and emotional skills.
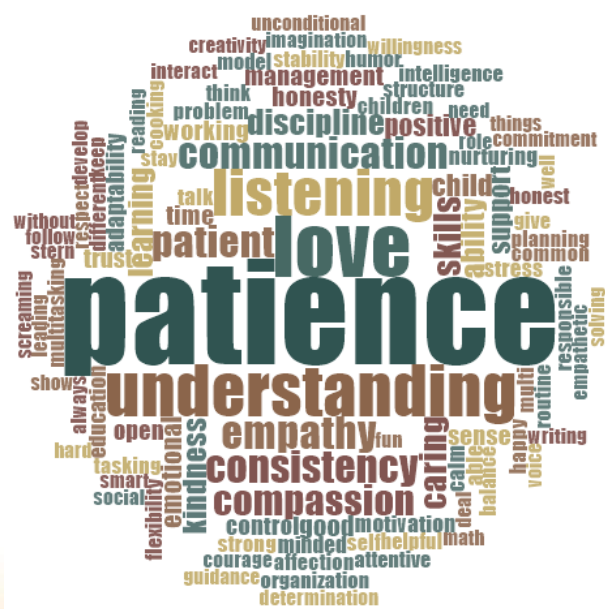

Figure 1. Parent Skills

Figure 2. Child Skills

Social and Emotional Competencies of Parents

The survey measured the social and emotional competencies of parents in five skill areas. The ratings of their own skills are divided into three groups – low, moderate, and high skill levels. The ratings for each skill area are averaged for an overall measure.

As shown in the chart below (Figure 3), more parents rate themselves as highly skilled in self-management and social awareness than other skills. Many parents rate themselves as having low skill levels in self-awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision making.

Legend: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ High

	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision Making	Social and Emotional Competency Overall
High	35%	55%	51%	44%	40%	35%
Moderate	25%	15%	20%	19%	21%	41%
Low	40%	30%	29%	37%	39%	24%

Self-Awareness
- identifying emotions
- accurate self-perception
- recognizing strengths
- self-confidence
- self-efficacy

Self-Management
- impulse control
- stress management
- self-discipline
- self-motivation
- goal setting
- organizational skills

Social Awareness
- perspective-taking
- empathy
- appreciating diversity
- respect for others

Relationship Skills
- communication
- social engagement
- relationship building
- teamwork

Responsible Decision Making
- identifying problems
- analyzing situations
- solving problems
- evaluating
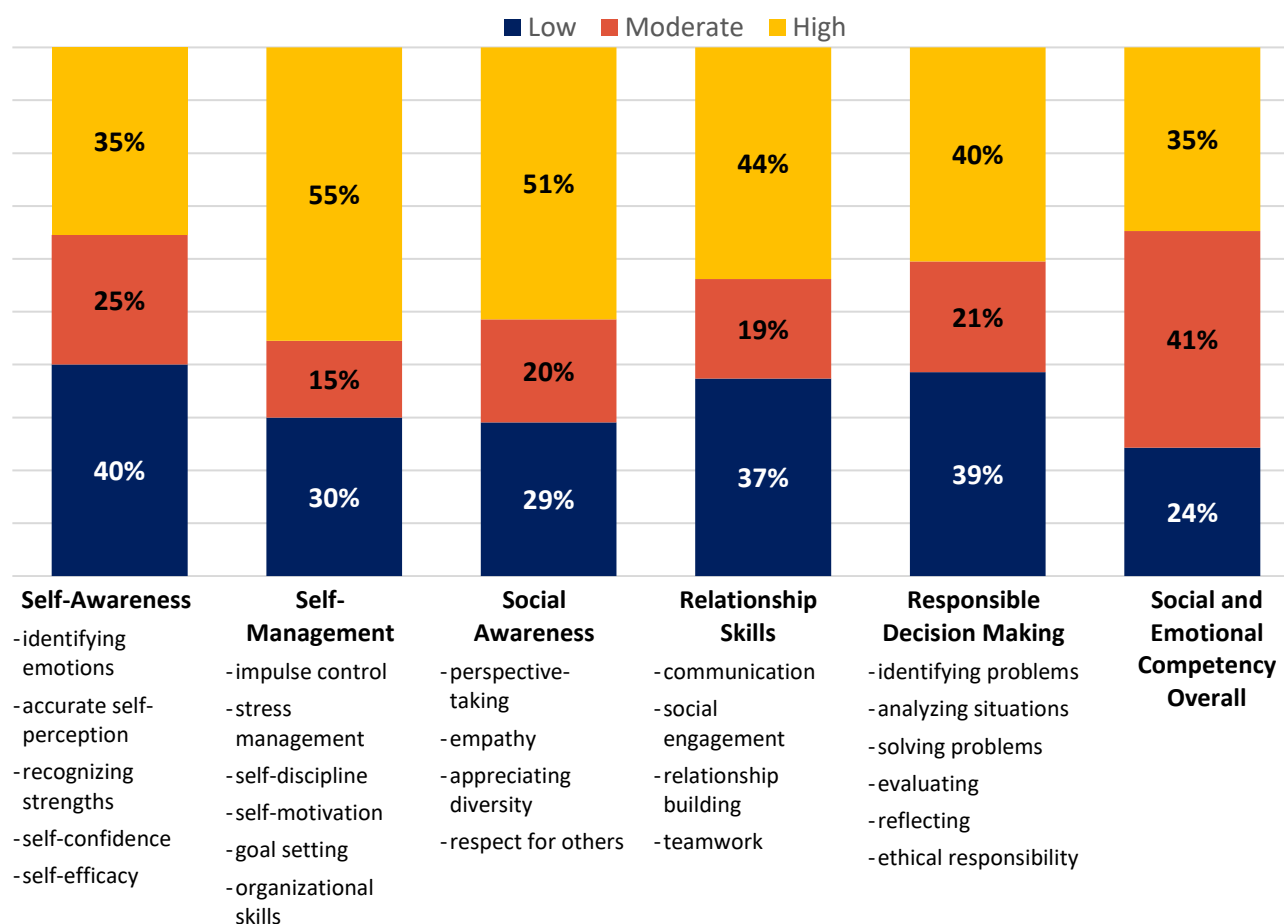- reflecting
- ethical responsibility

Figure 3. Social and Emotional Competency of Parents

Important Beliefs of Parents

The survey asked respondents how much they agreed with various statements about parenting. Their levels of agreement are summarized below.

Aspirations for Their Parenting

- Most parents (96%) want to be a stable and positive influence in their child's life.

- Most parents (97%) agree that it is important that their child is well cared for and develops well both physically and mentally.

- Most parents (96%) agree it is important that their child is prepared to do well when it is time for them to start school.

Child Development

- Most parents (96%) agree that babies and young children need to be read to, spoken to, and played with to develop healthy brains.

Learning New Parenting Skills

- Most parents (84%) believe they can benefit from learning new parenting ideas / skills.

- Most parents (70%) are interested in learning new and better ways to discipline their child.

- Most parents (72%) are interested in learning new and better ways to control their frustration / anger when their child misbehaves.

- Most parents (84%) would like to learn more things they can do right now with their child to help prepare them to do well in school.

Staying Resourceful as a Parent

- Most parents (79%) have ways to take care of themselves when parenting starts to feel stressful.

- Most parents (83%) have someone they can turn to for advice about parenting.

Prioritization of Topics by Parents

The survey asked respondents to rank 51 parenting topics based on what they were most interested in learning. The following list includes those ranked in the top third.

- How to help children to be more responsible

- Money (values and money management, entitlement, talking about differences in income)

- Talking with children about differences in people and families (when to talk about it and what to say about things like people of different races, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, and bi-racial or same-sex parent families)

- Childhood trauma (how to deal with trauma, seeking help, managing, things that trigger)

- How to help children to be more loving

- Eating/food concerns like hoarding, overeating, trauma, healthy eating habits/nutrition, grazing/snacks, picky eating, etc.

- How to help children to be more fulfilled

- Talking with children about differences within our family (when to talk about it and what to say about things like family members of different races, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, and bi-racial or same-sex parent families)

- How to help children to be more empathetic

- How to help children to be more confident

- How to help children to be more caring

- Helping children use critical thinking skills to identify types of media and the kinds of messages they are sending (also called "media literacy")

- Engaging a child in a conversation about seeking help like seeing a counselor, substance use evaluation, medical specialist, advanced school testing/screening

- Challenging behaviors: Defiance

- How to help children to be more kind

- Teaching a child to ask for what they need (like with a teacher at school)

- Picking up and understanding a child's cues

- Hygiene (developing healthy habits like covering your mouth when you cough or regularly bathing as a teen)

- Death (of pets or friends or relatives)

Conversation Guide

Engaging in constructive dialogue about these results has the potential to improve outcomes in your community by revealing new understanding and opportunities.

Getting Ready for Constructive Dialogue[1]

Otto Scharmer, in his research on organizational and community change, recognized the importance of preparing ourselves to learn from new information. He calls this "Quieting the Voices." He noted three voices that can inhibit us from learning and engaging in constructive dialogue: the voice of judgement, the voice of cynicism, and the voice of fear. We encourage you to intentionally reflect on how you respond to the results shared in this report and how these voices may be getting in the way of you seeing and learning new information.

We encourage you to acknowledge these voices and try to "quiet" them as you engage in dialogue about these results.

Questions to Foster Constructive Dialogue[2]

Questions to Reveal Deeper Insights

- What surprised you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?
- What has had real meaning for you from what you have seen in the data?
- What has been your major learning, insight, or discovery so far from these data?

Questions to Focus Collective Attention

- How do these results challenge our current approaches?
- What opportunities can you see that the data are revealing?

Questions to Create Forward Movement

- What is possible here?
- What will it take to create change?
- What needs our immediate attention going forward?
- What do we still need to learn about this issue?

---

[1] Scharmer, C. O. (2009). *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* (1st edition). San Francisco, Calif: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

[2] Adapted from Brown, J., Isaacs, D., Community, W. C., Senge, P., & Wheatley, M. J. (2005). *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* (1 edition). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.