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***State’s community and technical colleges and the Department of Early Learning
highlight parenting education; Gov. Inslee issues proclamation***

OLYMPIA, Wash. – 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. The celebration has special significance locally because 2013/14 marks the 40th Anniversary of the Parenting Education Program at Whatcom Community College. The WCC Parenting Education Program currently serves 115 families in Whatcom County. Since 1973, the program has served approximately 5,000 families from Blaine, Ferndale, Nooksack, Everson, Mount Baker, Lynden, Bellingham, Burlington and Mount Vernon.

“Our faculty members are honored to work in a program that has served Whatcom County for 40 years,” said Kristine Smith, Whatcom Community College coordinator, parenting educator, and [Organization of Parenting Education Programs](#) board member. “The WCC Parenting Education Program is a staple in our community with over 3,000 alumni families.”

“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 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.

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- **Confidence:** Whether parenting a newborn, adopted child, blended family, adolescent or teen, parenting classes help participants become more confident caregivers. 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 on college campuses and branches, as well as churches, community centers, local schools, housing developments, and Head Start and ECEAP centers.

For more information on parenting education classes and programs in Whatcom County contact Whatcom Community College, visit our website at <http://www.whatcom.ctc.edu/cooppreschool> or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/WCCParentingEducation>.

Resources:

[Organization of Parenting Education Programs \(Washington Community and Technical Colleges\)](#)
[Department of Early Learning](#)
[Love. Talk. Play.](#)
[Useful Websites](#)

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. Contact: Kara Klotz, 360-725-4392 or kara.klotz@del.wa.gov

[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 420,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education. Contact: Sherry Nelson, 360-704-4308 or snelson@sbctc.edu.

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