Innovation with Integrity: Preparing Parent Educators Online*

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Abstract
To meet the changing needs of families, today’s parent education professionals must be prepared adequately with skills and knowledge; yet, through teaching methods and a regard for learning science that ensures quality outcomes. This article describes the redevelopment and delivery of an online graduate program for parent educators; one that integrates four principles of learning based on contemporary research and a curriculum built around professional competencies.

Keywords: online instruction, parent education, teacher preparation

We are living in an economic and social climate that is increasingly complex for families, with unparalleled demands placed on parents as individuals, and on their roles as caregivers and providers (Parlakian & Lerner, 2009). As such, there is a critical need for parent educators who can help parents navigate the challenges of daily life while building and maintaining positive relationships and environments for their children’s development (Cooke, 2006). Effective parent educators must stay current in their knowledge of families’ changing needs, parenting research, and pedagogical strategies. They also must employ innovative approaches to program delivery that keep pace with learner preferences.

Here, we describe the redesign and development of a program to prepare parent education professionals to meet the needs of today’s families: a graduate-level university program adapted for online delivery. The online platform affords participation by a wider range of students than does the traditional classroom program, thereby increasing the potential number and diversity of professionals in the field (Rickard & Oblinger, 2003). It employs distance communications
technology in program delivery, thereby enhancing student comfort with e-learning tools (e.g., asynchronous discussion boards, chat rooms, modular courses), which increasingly are deployed in the field. Most importantly, the platform facilitates the integration of critical dimensions of educational quality, such as attention to beginners’ professional development, to address competency standards through an environment that capitalizes on contemporary learning research. To do this, three sections are presented. First, we argue that high quality, innovative parent educator professional development is essential in providing support for today’s families. We then describe the key design and pedagogical elements of our program. Finally, we reflect on the program’s accomplishments to date and identify challenges to online instruction that must be met if the field of family education intends to move forward with this method of delivery.

**The Need for Quality Parent Educator Development**

The formal practice of parent education began as a gathering of mothers in the 19th century and developed into a professional field a century later (Smith, Perou, & Lesesne, 2002). During that time parent education evolved into different formats including; individual instruction in homes, small group classes, mass media approaches (Carter, 1996), and more recently, Internet and social media applications (Walker & Greenhow, 2008). Parent education addresses families across all socioeconomic strata and takes place in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, schools, early childhood programs, mental health agencies, churches, and social service agencies (Carter, 1996). Today the National Parenting Education Network (NPEN) asserts that the goal of parent education is: “To strengthen families by providing relevant, effective education and support and to encourage an optimal environment for the healthy growth and development of parents and children,” (NPEN, n.d., ¶ 1).

Decades of research on parenting practices (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000; Herbert, 2004), parent-child relationships (Heath, 2005; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), and children’s development (Shonkoff, & Phillips, 2000; Thompson, 2006) provide the foundation for the content and delivery of parent education. Research-based outcome frameworks help parent education programs define ways in which participants’ needs are addressed, and suggest benchmarks for measuring effectiveness (see Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994). In turn, evaluative research on parent education programs has resulted in a deeper understanding of the process, delivery, and contextual elements that help parents achieve their learning and behavioral goals (Jacobs, 2003). Components of effective parent education programs include: (a) a delivery mode that meets the specific needs of the parents in the group rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all parenting intervention model, and (b) professionals who are well-prepared to meet the needs of individual parents and unique groups (Carter, 1996; Smith et al., 2002). The field of parent education also has acknowledged the crucial and complex role of the parent educator, and the need for quality preparation of these educators. As a result, several organizations and academic institutions have developed recommendations
for parent educator competencies and guidelines for the programs that prepare these professionals (Cooke, 2006).

**The Demand for Innovation in Parent Educator Development**

The diversification of the U.S. population and new challenges facing families (e.g., economic and employment challenges) call for academic programs to provide current knowledge about the parent as learner, contemporary families, and content and resources to incorporate in teaching. At the same time, these programs must keep pace with the demands of the parent educator student population. Technological advances motivate parent education student interest in new learning formats and devices (Greder, Dies, & Schnurr, 2010).

Unquestionably, higher education is moving toward more efficient, cost-effective, environmentally conscious methods of instruction, particularly those that utilize the Internet as a virtual classroom (Ruth, Sammons, & Poulin, 2007). A recent report by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on *The College of 2020* asserts that progressive universities offer programs that are conducive to students’ mobile and technology-rich lifestyle (Chronicle Research Services, 2009). Therefore, innovative parent educator degree programs require technology that transcends geographical boundaries and prepares new professionals where they live and practice, incorporating research that reflects population trends in family life. The online delivery of a continuing education professional development program by the University of Iowa, demonstrated that this mechanism could be viable with professionals interested in parent education (Greder et al, 2010).

To respond to these demands, in 2005 the University of Minnesota began the re-development of its parent education program. For more than 25 years the University offered a classroom-based graduate program leading to a parent educator license (Minnesota requires a teaching license for all parent educators who are employed in school districts across the state.). With financial support and resources from the University, a consultant team of parent education practitioners redesigned eight courses for online delivery. These courses also were packaged as a graduate certificate in parent education, consisting of fewer credits than required for teacher licensure (16 versus 27 credits). By the fall of 2008, all courses in the certificate program were available for online delivery, and the graduate certificate could be promoted as a completely online program.

**Program Design: Innovation with Integrity**

**Adaptation from Classroom to Online Instruction**

A major consideration in the move to online delivery was to ensure instructional quality from the classroom environment be maintained. Therefore, we incorporated quality assurance principles of effective distance education, including those set forth by The Institute for Higher Education Policy (Anderson, 2009; IHEP, 2000, as cited in Cheney, 2008; Swan, Fredericksen, Pickett, Pelz, & Maher, 2000). Some of these principles, discussed later, include instruction that is guided, paced, and moderated; the use of a variety of features; providing technology support; and emphasizing social engagement.
Revised roles of instruction. In the online parent education (PE) program the instructor takes on a variety of roles, particularly that of facilitator, rather than lecturer. With course content provided through readings, media files, and hyperlinks the instructor spends much of his or her time participating in online discussion, posting thought-provoking questions, posing problems or scenarios for applied understanding, and occasionally correcting misinformation. The instructor also fulfills traditional responsibilities of teaching such as explaining and grading assignments and responding to individual student questions and concerns. Once a course is prepared for online delivery, instructors maintain online class sites and troubleshoot technical issues. Because students can participate at any time, instructors must visit the course sites frequently. In some ways the online instructor is always teaching and ready to respond to learners. This revised role toward course organization, social management, and content guidance is in keeping with anticipated changes for university faculty who increasingly teach online (Boettcher, 2007; Chronicle Research, 2009; Dool, 2007).

A Design for Learning Effectiveness and Parent Educator Competency

Our PE program introduced innovation both to online instruction and to parent education professional development through design elements that represent contemporary neuroscience research on integrative principles of learning. Specifically, we incorporated the four learning environmental design perspectives set forth by John Bransford and colleagues (Anderson, 2004; Boettcher, 2007; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999). Learner-centered environments begin with the knowledge, attitudes, experience, and cultural perspectives that learners bring to the setting, build on these perspectives, and provide a rich, interactive setting that permits the learner to make meaning and construct new knowledge. Knowledge-centered environments intentionally structure content and learning activities across the curriculum to provide an integrated path to understanding. Particularly important for students in the parent education program is movement from existing, experiential knowledge of parenting to knowledge of concepts critical to the discipline, including practices that facilitate effective parenting. Assessment-centered environments provide formal and summative opportunities for students to gather feedback on their progress and clarify their understanding. Finally, community-centered learning environments build a sense of community in the instructional process and structure, respecting the value of shared expectations, feedback from others, and social norms in participation and performance.

Critical to the design of learning environments is that these perspectives complement each other and that a systems approach is used to coordinate the content, process, and assessment of instruction (Bransford et al., 1999). Therefore, all courses in the parent education program integrate learning design principles and systematically integrate parent educator competency standards. Table 1 and the sections that follow summarize the ways in which instructional design aspects of the online parent educator program integrate learning environment perspectives. Determination of aspect match to learning principle was facilitated in part, by a checklist for online teacher preparation assessment (Greenhow,
Creating a learner-centered environment. Critical to successful delivery of adult education is an understanding of the adult as learner. The “life context of adults and some of the distinguishing characteristics of the adult learning process . . . differentiate adult education from other kinds of education” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2008, p. ix). Shared characteristics of the adult learners in the parent education program are their maturity, diversity, and practical goals. Based on a recent survey of enrolled students (Walker & Hardman, 2008), many come to the program with years of experience as a parent and/or working with parents, families, or children in some capacity. The average age of students is 37 and most (80%) are married with children living at home. While taking courses, 56% of the students work full time and another 31% work part time. Some come to the program right from an undergraduate program or take it as part of other advanced degree programs; others have been out of school for several years or more. Students also represent a range of locations, ethnicities, cultures, and perspectives on parenting. And, their technology skills and resources vary. Thus, the parent education program must address the needs and interests of a slightly older, more mature population of learners who bring a rich diversity of life experiences and lifestyle demands and who have a practical, targeted focus for their investment in learning. Like most adult learners, they have much to offer and expect much from a higher education program (Merriam, et al, 2008).

However, without careful attention to student needs and the diversity of approaches to learning, the online program might experience attrition through withdrawal or failing grades (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). As such, guided and paced instruction in part is achieved through the social constructivist format of the PE course delivery online (Anderson, 2004; Neal & Miller, 2005). Each course follows a structured, weekly modular format, with the first four days spent reading and in asynchronous discussion. Day 6 features a live ‘chat,’ and on the final day of the week students submit short reflection papers. The dual value of a weekly modular structure of the PE courses is that it directs student learning and encourages engagement by the entire class in a specific time period (Swan et al, 2000). While the flexibility of the course is desirable, directed study with required interaction provides a necessary balance of whole class focus for learning with self-study (Neal & Miller, 2005).

In addition, class sizes are kept small (20 maximum) to permit learner engagement and attention by the instructor (Swan, 2001). Small group and pair work is used for peer review. The collective experience and exchange of ideas through discussion fosters collaboration and the construction of new knowledge. Written assignments also permit independence in the adult learner’s application of course concepts and extension of their interests in parenting education.

The variety of media and instructional tools used in the courses allows students to tailor the learning experience to their individual style (Galbraith, 2004). Document formats complement the range of computer operating systems, connection speeds, and student preferences for learning. To assist students’ diversity in technology knowledge and local resources of assistance, the
university provides a variety of supports for the online learner (e.g., online advising and registration, online textbook purchase, technology tutorials; online and telephone technology assistance).

**Creating a knowledge-centered environment.** The parent education program was designed to support the development of professionals to meet standards of competency agreed upon by experts in the field (Cooke, 2006; DeBord et al., 2002; Minnesota State Board of Teaching, 2007a; Minnesota State Board of Teaching, 2007b; National Council on Family Relations, 2009). Student outcomes for each course were based on detailed analysis of the content and concepts essential to adequately prepare parent educators and on state of the art teaching methods for PE content. Table 2 describes how the coursework aligns with specific competency and content areas. Through the coursework students gain knowledge in content areas representative of adult learning and parent development, contemporary family issues, child development and parent-child interaction, and skills necessary for effective practice (e.g., curriculum planning and design, teaching methods, program evaluation.).

Three elements are addressed across the curriculum. These were determined upon consideration of competency standards in the field, and the mission of the College that houses our department (College of Education and Human Development, n.d.) Multiculturalism and families across the life span are emphasized through multidisciplinary scholarship and tailored class discussion and activities. For example, a case study involving a diverse group of teenage mothers with young children is used to design parent education curriculum as a whole class. Individually, students are encouraged to design their course project around a family situation that reflects a multicultural and/or lifespan emphasis. Preparing parent educators to see their role in community engagement and to help parents recognize the important role they can play in parenting-related community engagement is a third theme of the coursework (Doherty, Jacob & Cutting, 2009). This is demonstrated as students practice expanding their parenting discussions to include the public dimension and think about what cultural and community factors influence parents every day.

**Creating an assessment-centered environment.** A specific practice employed in the parent education program, selected because of its promotion of transformative learning, is critical reflection in the form of reflective writing. Reflective writing encourages students to critically examine their personal assumptions, beliefs, and practices in relation to the readings, course content, learning activities, and assignments. Mezirow (1990) suggests that “by far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection – reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling, and acting” (p. 13).

Reflective writing is woven throughout every course. At least five times during an eight-week course, for example, students prepare short papers that address the following questions:

- Where have I been stretched by the concepts and learning this week?
In what specific areas am I growing as a parent educator? Responses to these questions offer insights and applications of academic learning to both professional and personal growth and development that are made evident to the learner and the instructor. These papers might include reactions to other students’ perspectives, ‘aha’ moments when understanding theoretical underpinnings of parenting concepts, and personal challenges to apply learned principles to audiences outside of their comfort zone (e.g., immigrant parents, adolescent mothers). In a review of parent education programs in the US (Carter, 1996), a lack of reflection by professionals on the work they were doing with families was observed and raised as a critical issue. Our online parent education program provides an embedded reflective practice that encourages students to continue this practice in their direct work with families.

For instructors, student reflective writing offers an intimate and immediate connection between teaching (content and concepts) and learning (individual perspectives of growth and progress). These papers also offer continual and formative feedback on the course and teaching, allowing instructors to individualize and tailor instruction to meet student needs. This personalized approach to teaching and learning strengthens the student-teacher relationship. Assessment also is fostered through written assignments applying course concepts throughout the courses and through mid-course and end-of-course assessments.

Creating a community-centered environment. Social engagement is key to online learning (Notess, 2009); yet, it must be nurtured, facilitated, and maintained to create a virtual environment that feels cohesive and familiar. Great care is taken in “establishing a trusting and conducive learning environment” (Galbraith, 2004, p. 16) for the PE learner, giving students the confidence to engage in online learning regardless of technical skill or previous experience. Each course begins with introductions between the students and instructor. Generally, this is done through a discussion forum, with students invited to share pictures, videos, and links to other online activities that acquaint them with others, such as blogs or social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). Weekly discussion and live chat sessions continue to foster social engagement. Students are encouraged to check in frequently and respond to others’ posts to maintain a lively discussion. When class sizes exceed 10, small groups are structured to facilitate more interactive dialogue and discussion.

Discussion forums also are available to discuss non-content topics such as class assignments or non-course topics like reading ideas, professional topics or to even ask a parenting question or two. Outside of structured classes, students engage through social networking sites, email, and department email lists and are encouraged to network at professional association events.

Early Observations and Cautious Next Steps

Responding to interests to prepare a new generation of parent educators uniquely responsive to contemporary family life and to expand the availability to learners beyond campus boundaries, we redesigned a traditional University classroom graduate level professional studies program with an eye to retaining
and even improving the quality of instruction and learning. Whether we have accomplished those goals is still too early to tell. Given the short duration of the online program, it is in, as Jacobs (2003) would label them, accountability and clarification phases. In other words, we are taking stock of whether the online parent education courses and overall program are doing what they set out to do and whether the program needs improvement to reach its goals. Accountability is being assessed through enrollment trends compared to the classroom program; program clarification is gleaned from student evaluations of the courses and instructor feedback. We have some early measures of program outcomes (parent educator competency) through the objective reports of student teaching by cooperating teachers and university faculty.

**Program Accountability**

Introducing courses online was clearly a boost to enrollment and diversity. In 2006, for example, three new students enrolled in the PE license only. All students were from Minnesota. In the 2008-2009 school year, the year that coursework went online and the certificate became available, 20 enrolled in the license program and 16 enrolled in the certificate program. Including students in the Master’s of Education program, all of whom take some of the PE coursework and some of whom also are committed to the license and/or certificate program, 124 students are currently enrolled. Certificate-only students identify at least six other states and two counties as their homes. We also have seen a diversification and interest in the parent education courses from students in disciplines other than family life education. Students earning advanced degrees in child psychology, social work, and educational policy currently take our courses. And individual course enrollment is stable with an average of 18 students per course. Consistent enrollment means that course scheduling is predictable and students can chart their programs toward graduation.

In part we attribute these improvements to our diverse and continual marketing efforts. When the certificate program officially was approved email messages about the program and availability of registration for online courses was sent to national listservs populated with parent and family educators, including the Education and Enrichment section of the National Council on Family Relations and the National Parent Educators Network (NPEN). In addition, a display was created along with attractive, high quality two sided 6 X 8” postcards, bookmarks and fact sheets for mail distribution and conference marketing. In addition to standard program information web pages provided by the University, we created a specific Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ; http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CI/Programs/FYC/ParentedFAQ.html) page to address the range of possible questions of prospective students. This page is field tested as we have contact with prospective students and talk with those enrolling in the program. Questions and information continually are revised to address student interest, and information changes (e.g., tuition policies, web link updates).

Additional plans for marketing include direct contact with university departments who do not offer graduate level parent education, increasing exhibition exposure
at professional conferences, and especially enhancing our visibility on Internet search engines (e.g., Google).

**Program Clarification**

As with classroom courses, students are given end-of-course evaluations to provide feedback on instruction and on the course in general. Overall, item averages for the online courses are similar to those for classroom instruction. However, these data are not strongly predictive of quality given the low response rate of online evaluations (Hmieleski, 2000). Therefore, we gauge student satisfaction more from the reflection papers collected at the end of the courses from all students. Students are asked to provide comments on the courses, and to ensure objectivity, are guaranteed that reflections will be counted but not read until final grades are submitted.

Themes from final student reflections in 20 sections of 8 courses between the fall of 2007 and spring of 2009 speak to the online format, quality of instruction, and skills gained from the courses. Regarding the online experience, many students express surprise at how connected they feel to the other students and instructors despite virtual learning and express appreciation at the frequency and intensity of the contact. As one first semester student from the fall of 2008 noted:

> During the online chat I was amazed at the interactions between our classmates. I thought each made wonderful and well thought out suggestions. We came to a consensus on many issues much more quickly than I had anticipated... I really felt like I was in the same room with this wonderful group of ladies having a lively and productive discussion.

Others also have found (Greder, et al, 2010; Swan, et al, 2000) this level of communication is necessary for successful online learning. For some students the learning curve to the online format is steep and they request more pre-course assistance with technology and planning. Although some courses use textbooks, all rely on journal and chapter readings to download and print. Some students find it necessary to improve their computer equipment and/or seek out better Internet connections and higher speed printers. Suggestions from experienced students encourage novices to create notebooks of readings, and rely on course and personal organizing tools.

Students report being impressed and challenged by the depth of the content and often are amazed at the amount of reading required. The modular format is popular across the board, and students express appreciation with the structure it provides that makes it convenient to plan their non-school lives around course demands. Assignments requiring real life application (e.g., observations of parent education, interviews with parents) are particularly popular. Not surprisingly, the practical experience of student teaching ‘brings it all together’ for most of the students, giving them direct application of the course content and weeks of discussion.
Clarification of the program also is accomplished through instructor feedback. Following each course, instructors provide detailed observations about course readings, social engagement activities, assignments, and student reactions that are used to refine and revise content and instruction as appropriate for this phase of program evaluation. Instructors particularly value reading student weekly reflections as evidence of the process of learning. For example, a student in a 2008 section of the Curriculum Development course remarked,

_Something clicked with me when reading that paragraph. I was able to make the connection back to my parent observation from my earlier class, and realized that the parent educator was not ‘crossing the line’ at all; rather she was being extremely observant, knowledgeable and professional in helping her group of parent[s] to reach their fullest potential._

Feedback from cooperating teachers echo that students are receiving the content and practice preparation necessary to be competent and effective parent educators. In person observation reports of three classes of student teachers do not qualitatively vary from those of students whose body of coursework was classroom-based, and identify excellence and readiness.

**Challenges to Overcome**

Although we are optimistic about the value, reach, and quality of the online program as designed and implemented, we are aware of challenges that remain. As others have noted (e.g., Lockee, Moore, & Burton, 2002; Ruth et al, 2007) e-learning in higher education must address a variety of obstacles to sustain programs, and provide quality. Many of these are beyond the sincere efforts of departmental faculty and depend on the commitment of administration. Building an online program is an involved process to say the least. Our situation provided a number of efficiencies that made the renovation possible in a relatively short time for minimal cost. Still, it took a team of content and technology professionals, internal grant support from the University, and two years to revise the curriculum and market the program. We continue to need technology support to troubleshoot problems and occasionally run into policy or evaluation issues that the University has not resolved yet for online instruction (e.g., reconsideration of student conduct policy written for face to face instruction; ways to increase course evaluation response rates). Other parent education programs interested in online learning must demand university infrastructure that is supportive at all phases of program design and delivery (Ruth, et al, 2007).

Teaching online is time-intensive for instructors, influencing its cost-effectiveness for universities (Cavanaugh, 2005). The ‘always on’ nature of the courses and the need to maintain student engagement can demand two or three times the instructor time that classroom courses do for connecting with students and facilitating discussion (Ruth, et al, 2007). The permanent nature of text-based teaching requires more time and attention paid to the words and the tone of the messages posted than is necessary with spontaneous verbal responses (Brookfield,
Permanent faculty may question the impact on overall productivity and may be tempted to turn instruction over to adjuncts, as other online programs have done (Ruth, et al, 2007). Such a move would threaten graduation rates and a sense of stability. In addition, course reading, assignment and participation demands, along with eight-week sessions that often sequence across semesters without break, can mean a time-intensive experience for students.

A final limitation of online instruction is the lack of face-to-face interactions. Students and faculty report a desire for more opportunities to hone teaching skills and become more closely acquainted with others involved in the program. As Bransford and colleagues (1999) and online instructional design scholars (Anderson, 2004) note, it is imperative that instructional technologies capitalize on innovations that facilitate more visual, social interaction that simulate the classroom environment, and use collaborative methods. A definite planned enhancement to our programming is in further use of social and visual media (e.g., use of ‘ning’ as a platform for course delivery; building up the video library in iTunesU). These allow for more creativity, collaboration and contributions by students, allowing them to personalize the learning experience, and benefit from the unique contributions of others. They also permit more opportunities for students to view and practice teaching methods, collaborate on curriculum design projects, and download audio and video content representative of families and parent-child relationships they are likely to experience in professional work.

An optional summer residential institute is being considered that would offer advanced training in teaching methods. Many universities and instructors are going with a ‘hybrid’ approach to the use of online instruction that marries distance with classroom practice (Cheney, 2008). In this modified hybrid approach, online and other students would have an opportunity to engage in and practice teaching methods and group facilitation skills in a more problem-solving, interactive and facilitated ways than are currently possible online. This would build on the existing teaching methods course (offered in the spring semester) and would attract practicing non-degree seeking professionals who seek professional development courses in the summer.

Conclusion

As we find solutions to meet existing limitations to online instruction, we feel confident that this move into the 21st Century of higher education means a more diverse, better-prepared group of parent educators. Our students obtain a specialized, graduate degree that will help them be more competitive for existing jobs in parent education. Further, a degree in parent education can help graduates create new positions for parent educators in settings that traditionally have served only children (e.g., early childhood centers) or that have focused on aspects of development that can be strengthened with attention to parent education (e.g., early intervention; academic performance; Carter, 1996).

With attention to tested features of success in online courses to environmental models of effective learning and instructional design, and
especially with constant attention to the practical, learning needs of our busy,
independent adult students, we are encouraged that this platform for learning can
truly be effective in its goals. Online learning offers more students the opportunity
for advanced preparation through its “anytime, anywhere” delivery. Exposure
through a global, interactive platform for learning also means that parent educator
students have rich opportunities to learn as part of an international, culturally
diverse community group and engage around parenting practices, ethics,
educational programming and policies that may not be possible in traditional
brick and mortar settings. Gaining comfort and skill in learning online also can
transfer to eventual practice of teaching online (Wilson & Stacey, 2004) and the
integration of technology and social media skills that can address the learning
needs of a new generation (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Together these elements
offer a greater promise of support to the families of today, and of tomorrow.

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Table 1. *Principles of Effective Learning Applied to Elements of Online Instruction in Parent Educator Preparation Courses* *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Online Instruction</th>
<th>Principles of Effective Learning Environments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner Centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modular, Timed Delivery</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussions; Email (Asynchronous)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussions (Chat)(Synchronous)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Writing w/ Instructor Feedback; Guided Journaling</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments Applying Online Content Through Real Life Interactions</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formative and Summative Course Assessments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor as Facilitator, Social Manager, and Content Guide</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Group Peer Review/Discussion</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance in a Variety of Formats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text, Graphic and Media Formats Complement Learning Preferences</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-linked Resource Areas</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise Shared Through Online Panels, Interviews, Interactive Dialogue</td>
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* Note: Adapted from Bransford et al, 1999.
Table 2. *Parent educator competencies reflected in online course content*

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<tr>
<th>Parent Educator Competency</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Content</th>
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- Investigate Multiple Determinants Of Parenting (Child, Social Support, Partner Relationships, Developmental History, Etc)                                       |
| 2. Understanding How Adults Learn And Develop Related To Personal And Family Development. | Everyday Experiences Of Families                  | -Investigate The Influence Of Culture, Work, Time, Class, And Violence On Families’ Experiences.  
-Examine Family’s Everyday Experiences From A Strength-Based Approach.                                                      |
-Integrate Parent-Child Interaction Theories And Research Into Professional Practice.                                                                |
|                                                                                          | Parent Learning and Development: Implications for Parent Education | -Develop Insight Into The Parenting Experience And Development Of Parents Through Reflection On The Lives Of Parents And Theories Of Learning And Development  
-Explore The Nature Of Attachment And Reciprocity In Parent-Child                                                                                     |
3. Creating Instructional Opportunities That Are Adapted To Learners’ Needs And Backgrounds.


6. Using Appropriate Communication Techniques To Foster Collaboration And Supportive Interactions In Learning Among Parents.


Parent Education Curriculum

- Demonstrate Competence In Program Development; Constructing, Critiquing, And Selecting Curriculum; And Lesson Planning.

- Assess The Quality And Relevance Of Parent Education Curricula To Meet The Needs Of Parents And Children Served.

- Explore Teaching Strategies Specific To Adult Learner Needs Individually And In Groups.

- Identify Successful Strategies Practicing Professionals Use Tied To Parent Learning.

- Practice And Critique Own Teaching Methods Using Videotaped Observation.

Teaching And Learning In Parent Education

- Work Directly With Families In A Parent Education Program.

- Critically Reflect On The Practice Of Parent Education.

Student Teaching In Parent Education

Relationships
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Course Categories</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Implementing Assessment And Evaluation Techniques To Inform Practice And Measure Effectiveness.</td>
<td>Assessment And Evaluation In Parent Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate Competency In Applying Course Performance, Assessing Program Quality, And Measuring Parent Learning And Development Material To The Tasks Of Monitoring Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Engaging In Continual Self-Reflection And Professional Development Opportunities.</td>
<td>All Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Advocating For Parents In Settings That Influence Their Development And Interactions With Their Children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Minnesota Core Competencies of Parent and Family Educators. (July, 1996). (Available from Family Education, University of Minnesota, 159 Pillsbury Drive SE, 245 Peik Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455)