

Responses and Evaluations

Training Evaluations

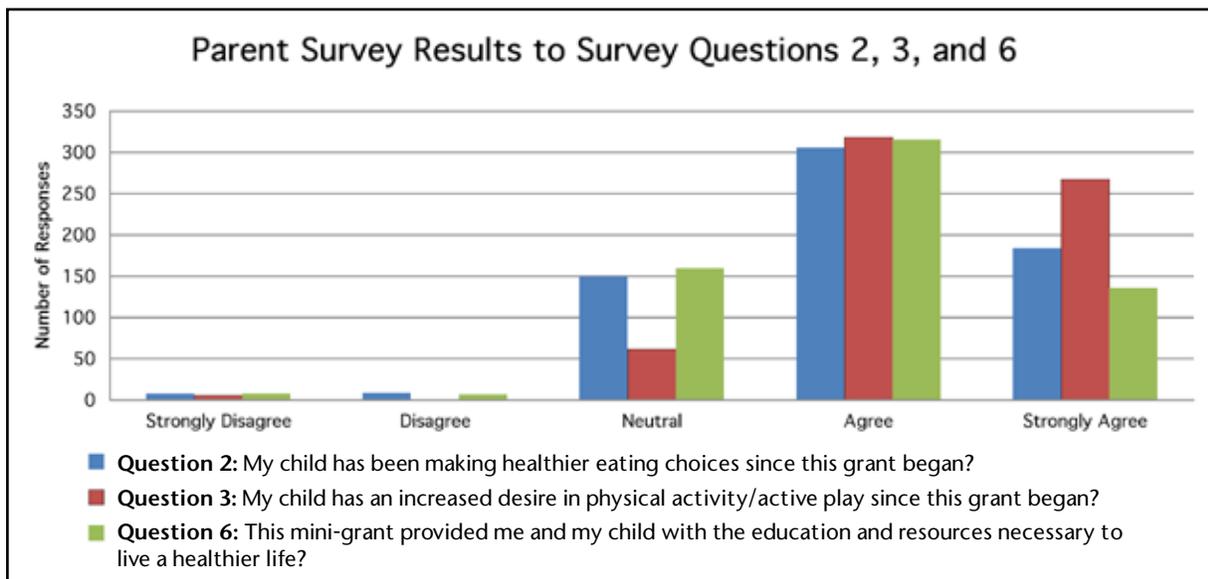
The trainings attracted attendees from child care centers, Head Starts, and sponsoring organizations from across Alaska. The three regional trainings had about 138 attendees from 74 different child care organizations. The trainings had an overall rating average of 4.89 out of 5 (1 meaning they strongly disagreed and didn't find the trainings helpful, and 5 meaning they strongly agreed and found the trainings to be helpful). Many of the recipients said they would definitely attend this training in the future, and that the activities were amazing, low-cost, adaptable, and easy to implement in any space.

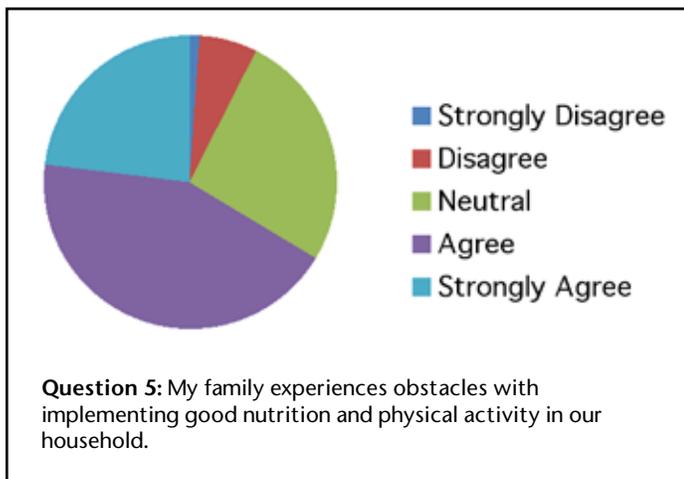
Parent Evaluations

Parent evaluations were handed out toward the end of the mini-grant to each grant awardee in order to determine the grant's success; over 650 parent surveys were returned. Seventy-five percent of the parents who returned a survey said that their child has been making healthier eating choices since this grant was implemented at their child's daycare center—only two percent said they disagreed and

saw no changes in their child's eating habits. Ninety percent of the parents who returned a survey said their child had an increased desire to participate in physical activity, and only one percent said they disagreed. Many parents felt that their child needed to be educated in good nutrition and physical activity (sixty-seven percent agreed and only eleven percent felt that their child didn't need to be educated in these areas). Twenty-two percent of the parents surveyed felt like implementing good nutrition and physical activity in their household was difficult. Many parents feel like their schedules are very busy, and they often don't have the time for additional exercise or to plan and make healthy meals. It was also noted that money and inclement weather were often a factor in their food choices and activity levels. Overall, sixty-nine percent of parents surveyed felt like the grant provided their child(ren) with the education and resources necessary to live a healthier life. Twenty-four percent of the parents surveyed were neutral on the subject, and only two percent disagreed.

Many parents had wonderful things to say about their care providers, the activities they were conducting, and the nutrition and physical education they were providing to their kids. Several parents expressed that they feel the nutrition education aspect is important, especially in the early years when children tend to be picky. Many of





the parents felt like they need to be better educated on the things that their children are learning and on the food program so they are able to reinforce healthy lifestyles at home.

Participant Evaluations

A requirement of the mini-grant was that all grant participants take part in an outcome evaluation at the end of the grant period. Eighty-four percent of the grant participants found that the family-style dining, *Active Play!*, and *More Than Mud Pies* activities they introduced were well-received by the children in their care. Grant participants noticed that children really enjoyed the *Active Play!* activities, especially Swat the Fly, Bubble Wrap Jumping, Clean the Room and Feed the Penguin. A few participants found that the physical activity lessons were better received by their preschool-aged children, while the *More Than Mud Pies* activities were better received by their school age children. Eighty-six percent of the grant participants thought that the activities introduced by this grant helped the children develop their fundamental movement skills (fourteen percent were neutral on the subject), and seventy-six percent felt the children were making healthier eating choices on their own (twenty-three percent were neutral). Several providers commented that their children were being more physically active, had better motor skills, and a stronger interest to get out and move. Cooking also seemed to be a big hit with the children. Several participants reported that the children began asking

to cook healthy foods daily, and requested that they do cooking activities more often.

Food preparation and cooking provide children with a sense of personal achievement as they meet their own food needs, and it allows them to create and produce real food that other people will eat. It's a good hands-on tool for learning and they are able to enrich their vocabulary by learning new words such as stir, blend, beat, grind, melt, knead, and melt. Cooking also allows children to develop a basic understanding of quantity concepts, motor skills, safety awareness, and scientific concepts. Cooking is an easy activity that can be done at home or in a child care setting at very little to no cost that is guaranteed to educate the child in a fun, safe, and social setting.

While some participants found the grant difficult to implement or the reporting requirements to be onerous, all of the participants who remained dedicated to the grant agreed that if given the opportunity they would do the grant again in the future. One of the biggest challenges with this grant was staff turnover and staff training. Several participants said it was hard to keep staff motivated throughout the entire grant period. Teacher aides were often resistant to get involved, and some staff were not very receptive to the grant, which made it difficult to implement at times.

Occasionally, staff lacked motivation because they do not understand the general concept of what they're supposed to be doing. Many of the WIACC participants conducted multiple staff trainings in order to convey grant information in a clear and concise way. Staff trainings ensured that all of the staff are aware of the goals and project objectives. Both physical activity and nutrition education lessons can be taught in ways that encourage hands-on activities, which force people to be actively involved and engaged in the activity at hand, and they are likely to retain more information. If staff participation and training are a problem, conducting a series of hands-on staff workshops could help. Nutrition education and physical activity can be fun for almost anyone, as long as it's presented well.