



Cookie Cart

*An evaluation of a youth work experience
and empowerment program*

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Introduction

Cookie Cart is a nonprofit employment program that serves youth living in or near North Minneapolis. This is an area that has been designated as an Empowerment Zone because of its high unemployment rates, an area where youth frequently have to compete with adults for jobs. In addition, student achievement and graduation rates in North Minneapolis schools are substantially lower than in other metro area schools.

Cookie Cart offers young people age 14 to 17 an opportunity to develop life, leadership, and job skills through training and employment at a retail and commercial bakery. The business model provides a first paid job experience for youth, and helps participants gain job and life skills necessary to transition to traditional employment in the community.

Evaluation approach

In order to assess the effectiveness of the Cookie Cart strategy for helping youth to gain skills, Cookie Cart contracted with Wilder Research to design and complete an evaluation of the program. The evaluation plan requires Cookie Cart participants to complete a self-administered survey, and their parents to complete a telephone or self-administered survey describing experiences at Cookie Cart and opinions about the value of the Cookie Cart employment experience. Youth are eligible to complete this evaluation after 90 days of continuous experience in the Cookie Cart program. Parents are asked to complete a telephone interview after their child has been employed for a minimum of 90 days at Cookie Cart.

This is the fifth year Wilder Research has summarized the results of surveys completed by youth and their parents. For the first year of evaluation, youth and parent survey participation was modest. During the second evaluation period survey participation of youth and parents increased significantly. In the third evaluation year, parent and youth survey participation decreased significantly yet remained consistent through the fourth year. In the fifth and current year (2010), both youth and parent survey participation increased dramatically. This year constitutes the highest rate of parent participation to date.

Figure 1 shows the complete breakdown of youth and parent survey participation across all evaluation years.

1. Number of participating youth and parents completing surveys across all study cohorts

	Year 5 (2010)	Year 4 (2009)	Year 3 (2008)	Year 2 (mid-2007)	Year 1 (2006-2007)
Number of youth	64	44	49	64	37
Number of parents	43	17	19	30	18

Participating youth completed their surveys on-site at the Cookie Cart facility. In 2010, program staff reported that in addition to their volunteers conducting telephone interviews with parents, self-administered surveys were sent to parents for an increased response rate. All surveys were returned to Wilder Research for review and analysis.

2010 youth survey results

The 2010 survey included youth who have participated in the program for at least three months and up to three years.* Approximately 6 of 10 respondents were female. The majority (80%) of youth were in the 9th, 10th or 11th grade. Seventy-two percent of the youth surveyed were African American, 9 percent Asian, and 6 percent were Hmong. The remaining youth participants identified themselves as Mixed race, Native American, and White. There has been a notable decrease in the percentage of Hmong youth participants since the second year of the evaluation (12% in year four, 19% in year three, and 16% in year two). Also, the percentage for Mixed race youth participants decreased significantly since year four (23%). The following figure shows a complete breakdown of youth characteristics for the most recent study period.

2. Characteristics of 2010 youth survey participants (N=64)

	Characteristic	Percent
Gender	Female	59%
	Male	41%
Grade level	8 th grade	3%
	9th grade	19%
	10th grade	37%
	11th grade	25%
	12 th grade	16%
	Racial/ethnic background	African American
Mixed racial background		6%
Hmong		6%
Asian		9%
Native American		5%
White/Caucasian		2%

Note: Some youth may have also taken the survey in previous years.

Skills and attitudes of youth

In 2010, as in previous years, youth were asked questions about their skills and attitudes and whether they thought they had increased, stayed the same, or decreased on any of these attributes during their period of employment with Cookie Cart. The following table shows trends over all evaluation periods for youth participants.

3. Youths' self ratings of change in their skills and attitudes during their employment at Cookie Cart across all study cohorts

Skills and attitudes	Percent reporting positive changes				
	Current study year Year 5 (2010) N=64	Year 4 (2009) N=44	Year 3 (2008) N=49	Year 2 (mid-2007) N=64	Year 1 (2006-2007) N=37
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	82%	86%	85%	81%	69%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	81%	80%	85%	78%	89%
Ability to interview for a job	75%	80%	80%	76%	71%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	79%	57%	80%	77%	70%
Ability to work as a team member	84%	84%	79%	79%	89%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	75%	77%	77%	81%	89%
Willingness to help others	71%	75%	76%	67%	70%
Ability to see yourself as a role model for younger youth	75%	72%	69%	64%	64%
Skills in serving customers	76%	72%	67%	73%	63%
Ability to solve problems on own	67%	66%	67%	61%	60%
Ability to make good decisions	79%	61%	65%	70%	76%
Understanding the consequences of your behavior	72%	68%	65%	68%	58%
Ability to set goals	74%	72%	65%	67%	75%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	75%	86%	65%	65%	78%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	66%	59%	63%	69%	66%
Involvement in leadership activities	71%	57%	63%	65%	74%
Skills in getting along with other kids	66%	74%	61%	58%	68%
Ability to manage own money	73%	66%	59%	44%	63%
Ability to get along with adults	61%	58%	57%	61%	68%
Self-control when frustrated or angry	48%	55%	51%	48%	43%
Feelings of self-esteem	47%	52%	51%	45%	53%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	53%	54%	46%	51%	49%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	57%	49%	38%	48%	60%
Enthusiasm for school	46%	32%	37%	33%	44%
Getting along at home	34%	28%	35%	34%	42%

The table above shows that youth ratings of their ability to interview for a job, find and keep a job, willingness to carry out responsibilities, present themselves as experienced employees, and work as a team, remained steady or showed improvement across the five evaluation periods. Additionally in 2010, there was a 22 percent increase in the percentage of youth who reported on that they were comfortable talking to a potential employer (79% in 2010 compared to 57% in the previous year). Additionally in 2010, more youth reported that they were able to make good decisions, and more were involved in leadership activities than in the previous study period. There was however, a decline from year four in reported knowledge of how to dress for an interview. Although this decline is modest, knowledge levels are higher than in years two and three.

In year five, there were increased positive ratings by youth related to their future education and their overall attitude towards school. While the last three evaluation periods showed a decline in time spent thinking about or planning for college since year one, this year showed some gains; 57 percent of youth said they thought about college compared to 49 percent in year four and 38 percent in year three. In the area of enthusiasm for school, youth ratings had declined after year one and remained steady through year four. However, this area also showed positive change in 2010 with 46 percent of youth reporting enthusiasm for school compared to 32 percent of youth in year four.

Although youth attitudes toward school are less likely to be directly affected by participation in Cookie Cart, and are not the primary focus of the program, they do represent activities and interests that are relevant to the long-term success of youth and likely worth some additional attention by program staff.

Best things about Cookie Cart work experience for youth

To learn more about the perceptions and experiences of youth, program participants were asked to say in their own words, what they liked most about Cookie Cart. All of the 64 participants provided comments and their answers have been represented below:

4. Best things about Cookie Cart work experience for youth

	Number	Percent
Working with/having fun with peers/meeting new people/nice people	33	52%
The managers/having helpful and understanding managers	10	16%
A good job experience; learned a lot	9	14%
The cookies	9	14%
The environment (like family)	8	13%

Note: Percentages do not total 100%. Youth were allowed to name more than one “best thing” about their experience at Cookie Cart.

Other positive benefits that mentioned by three or fewer respondents include group activities such as sales events, access to opportunities and skills that will support them in the future, life skills training, and the focus of helping teenagers.

The following comments are illustrative:

I like the employees. I like that everybody is [respectful] and kind to one another. There are never really any disagreements with each other. Everybody works as a team.

The one thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is the people I work with. They make coming to work that much easier and more fun.

I would say the managers. Not most would advocate and make exceptions and also see my full potential like they do.

That they take the time to teach us and prepare us for the job world and provide classes that will increase our job skill knowledge.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is that it prepares you for future jobs. The Cookie Cart has taught me so many things I did not know. The Cookie Cart is such a good experience.

The thing I like about the Cookie Cart is all the opportunities you get to become a better employee and to become better prepared for other jobs.

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is the cookies. The cookies taste GREAT.

The one thing about the Cookie Cart that I like is that I can talk to others with them listening and I can make friends. I also like the Cookie Cart because the people I work with and talk to listen to what is on my mind.

People are really nice and friendly here. There is no drama and it's nice to come here after school and be around people that are drama free. I also like the fast pace and the hard working people.

Perceptions of supervisors

Youth place high value on the relationships they have with their Cookie Cart supervisors. When asked what they thought of their supervisor as a teacher, about 7 out of 10 reported that their supervisor was a great teacher, similar to previous year's ratings. Additionally, 97 percent of youth said that they probably or definitely could seek the help of their supervisors if they needed it, compared to 90 percent in year four.

Some examples of what youth had to say about the staff or supervisors follow:

I like having a boss who is so easy to talk to. I have a feeling I won't always have the opportunity to experience that in every job.

The one thing that I like the most is the staff because they are so easy going but they don't play about getting work done.

The staff is very friendly and helpful. Not just with work, but with personal problems.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is my managers. They make me feel more than welcome.

How all the staff are very respectful to you and customers.

The "bosses" are very outgoing and understanding.

Impact on grades

Youth were asked, as in previous years, whether they believed their work experience at Cookie Cart had any impact on their grades in school. This year's youth (74%) said working at Cookie Cart had no impact on their grades compared to 64 percent of youth in year four. Twenty-six percent reported improvement in their grades that they attributed to their Cookie Cart experience.

Differences in skills and attitude changes by gender, grade level, and length of time in the program

The analysis also examined the skill and attitude differences by gender, grade level in school, and length of time in the program. The 2010 survey results show that more "older youth" (11th – 12th graders) compared to "younger youth" (8th – 10th graders) reported positive changes in the following skills and attitudes:

- Knowledge of how to dress for an interview (90% vs. 72%)
- Ability to interview for a job (84% vs. 71%)
- Ability to make good decisions (85% vs. 77%)
- Ability to present themselves as experienced employees (81% vs. 74%)

The survey results also showed that "veteran youth" of the program (involved 1 year or more) tended to report more positive changes compared to "newcomers" (involved for 90 days) in the following skills and attitudes:.

- Skills in serving customers (84% vs. 67%)
- Knowledge of how to dress for an interview (90% vs. 79%)
- Ability to interview for a job (82% vs. 68%)

Males reported more positive changes compared to females in the following skills and attitudes:

- Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart (92% vs. 76%)
- Skills in serving customers (86% vs. 70%)
- Ability to interview for a job (84% vs. 69%)
- Comfort talking to a potential employer (88% vs. 61%)

Girls, however, reported more positive ratings compared to boys in the following areas:

- Greater willingness to carry out responsibilities (84% vs. 77%)
- Ability to set goals (79% vs. 67%)
- Seeing themselves as a positive role model (81% vs. 65%)

Figure 5 on the following page shows the most frequently reported positive changes, in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program.

5. Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program (Total N= 64)**

Skills and attitudes	Male N=26		Female N=38		8th-10 th graders N=37		11th-12th graders N=26		3 months N=31		1 year or more N=33	
	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	24	92%	38	76%	35	83%	26	85%	30	80%	32	84%
Skills in serving customers	22	86%	33	70%	29	76%	25	80%	24	67%	31	84%
Ability to work as a team member	26	85%	38	84%	37	84%	26	89%	31	81%	33	88%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	25	84%	38	68%	36	72%	26	81%	31	61%	32	88%
Ability to interview for a job	25	84%	36	69%	35	71%	25	84%	28	68%	33	82%
Ability to make good decisions	23	83%	38	76%	34	77%	26	85%	30	80%	31	77%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	24	79%	38	79%	36	81%	25	80%	30	80%	32	78%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	24	79%	37	73%	34	74%	26	81%	29	72%	32	78%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	26	77%	37	84%	37	81%	25	84%	31	84%	32	78%

* Percent positive reflects the percentage of only those youth that reported an increase or positive change based on the number of valid responses to each item.

** The valid number can vary based on the number of respondents completing each item. Percents are based on the total number of valid responses for each item shown in the table.

5. Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program (Total N= 64) (continued)**

Skills and attitudes	Male N=26		Female N=38		8th-10 th graders N=37		11th-12th graders N=26		3 months N=31		1 year or more N=33	
	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive
Ability to manage your money	26	77%	38	71%	37	81%	26	65%	31	74%	33	73%
Involvement in leadership activities	25	72%	36	69%	34	65%	26	81%	30	70%	31	71%
Willingness to help others	25	72%	38	71%	36	69%	26	77%	31	58%	32	84%
Ability to set goals	24	67%	38	79%	35	74%	26	77%	31	74%	31	74%
Ability to see yourself as a role model for younger kids	26	65%	37	81%	36	75%	26	77%	31	71%	32	78%

* Percent positive reflects the percentage of only those youth that reported an increase or positive change based on the number of valid responses to each item.

** The valid number can vary based on the number of respondents completing each item. Percents are based on the total number of valid responses for each item shown in the table.

Cookie Cart Captains

Cookie Cart offers eligible youth an opportunity to develop and strengthen job skills through promotion to Cart Captain. This position is earned by youth who have demonstrated leadership skills to engage in peer-to-peer learning experiences.

As a Cart Captain, youth are initially trained by staff to ensure the quality of the bakery products produced by their peers by checking cookie orders, and reading packaging slips for accuracy. Cart Captains in turn train peers how to prepare and package orders. They also have responsibility to help peers follow baking area guidelines by keeping it clean and free from contaminants.

Additionally, Cart Captains work with new employees to ensure that customer service standards are met.

Cart Captains also report back to staff about progress of their peers.

Cookie Cart staff report that the peer-to-peer leadership approach is making a positive impact on program participants and that youth appreciate the help they receive from others their own age.

The following comments reflect some of the benefits of the Cart Captain model:

I like meeting all the new people and training them.

What I like the most is helping each other by understanding what they need help for – “new experience.”

One thing I like is getting to know others and work as a team.

What I like most is the will to help others and be a leader.

It feels like a family so you're not under the pressure of trying to be better than anybody. Everyone helps each other.

Parent survey results

As in previous evaluations, parents were asked to provide ratings on the same questions asked of youth. Telephone and self-administered surveys were completed by 43 parents during the 2010 period. Overall, parent's ratings of youth attitudes and skills were dramatically lower than ratings given by parents in previous study cohorts.

Figure 6 illustrates trends over time for parent participants.

6. Cookie Cart across all study cohorts

Skills and attitudes	Current study year	Percent reporting positive change			
	Year 5 (2010) N=43	Year 4 (2009) N=17	Year 3 (2008) N=19	Year 2 (mid-2007) N=30	Year 1 (2006-2007) N=18
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	72%	88%	94%	93%	94%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	72%	82%	94%	83%	77%
Ability to interview for a job	70%	87%	100%	96%	79%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	68%	94%	78%	81%	80%
Ability to work as a team member	74%	88%	95%	97%	82%
Ability to present him/herself as an experienced employee	61%	100%	100%	90%	94%
Willingness to help others	58%	77%	90%	86%	82%
Ability to see him/herself as a role model for younger youth	57%	94%	90%	93%	75%
Skills in serving customers	74%	93%	89%	89%	80%
Ability to solve problems on his/her own	60%	80%	84%	82%	69%
Ability to make good decisions	56%	94%	79%	66%	75%
Understanding the consequences of their behavior	57%	81%	90%	77%	69%
Ability to set goals	65%	71%	95%	72%	69%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	78%	100%	83%	83%	69%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	60%	94%	90%	57%	82%
Involvement in leadership activities	42%	93%	84%	72%	63%
Skills in getting along with other kids	49%	77%	84%	73%	56%
Ability to manage his/her money	65%	65%	79%	63%	65%
Ability to get along with adults	61%	82%	94%	80%	65%
Self-control when frustrated or angry	40%	65%	79%	66%	53%
Feelings of self-esteem	60%	82%	100%	79%	77%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	40%	81%	74%	43%	71%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	65%	75%	82%	66%	65%
Enthusiasm for school	52%	71%	79%	50%	59%
Getting along at home	56%	59%	90%	62%	77%

During the 2010 study, parents and youth showed similar ratings in several areas related to youth preparedness for work outside of Cookie Cart. The areas where parents and youth had the most similar ratings are shown in the table below:

6a. Most similar ratings by parents compared to youth

Skills and attitudes	Parents Year 5 (2010) N=43	Youth Year 5 (2010) N=64
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	78%	75%
Skills in serving customers	74%	76%
Ability to interview for a job	70%	75%
Ability to solve problems on his/her own	60%	67%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	60%	66%

Parents differed from youth in ratings of behaviors that could be easily observed outside of a work context. The following items show the greatest divergence in parent and youth ratings.

6b. Most dissimilar ratings by parents compared to youth

Skills and attitudes	Parents Year 5 (2010) N=43	Youth Year 5 (2010) N=64
Involvement in leadership activities	42%	71%
Willingness to help others	58%	71%
Ability to make good decisions	56%	79%
Skills in getting along with others	49%	76%
Getting along at home	56%	34%

Parents were also asked to provide open-ended comments about their perceptions of Cookie Cart and what they liked most about the program. Fifty-one percent of parents reported that the job experience for youth was the best thing, followed by a safe environment, a place where staff has expectations of the youth and provide structure, and the good cookies.

The vast majority of parents (41 of 43) responded to this question. Responses were categorized and are shown below.

7. What parents liked the most about the Cookie Cart program

	Number	Percent
Provides a job experience for kids /opportunity to work	21	51%
Keeps child out of trouble/safe environment/keeps child busy	5	12%
Effort that is put in for the kids/expectations are clear/provides structure	5	12%
The cookies	5	12%
The staff	3	7%
Provides positive experience/helps child mature	2	5%
Community presence helping inspire better ways for youth	2	5%
My child likes the job	2	5%

Note: Percentages do not total 100%. Parents were allowed to name more than one “best thing” about the Cookie Cart program.

The following examples are illustrative:

It gives my child the opportunity to work with co-workers that are her age. It helps her understand that at a slightly older age she can also be a manager, supervisor and trainer. She can have greater responsibilities and she enjoys the product.

They are the only employer to employ youth after school all year long. The only organization that keeps youth employed.

I like that my child is learning skills that she can take with her beyond Cookie Cart.

There is close supervision. It has structure. It is not just some employer trying to make money.

The peanut butter cookies are the best especially after being bought fresh and how well organized the employees are.

The one thing about the Cookie Cart I like the most is the polite and nice staff.

It allows my child to carry out responsibilities and present leadership as a role model.

One thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is that my daughter can get along with others and wants to come to work to help others.

I like the motivation they give to the kids.

They teach young people to work with others.

Recommendations for improvement

In year five, parents and youth had had very different views about what might be done to strengthen or improve the Cookie Cart experience. Parents and youth were asked what, if anything, could be improved about Cookie Cart.

Of the 43 parents who participated in the survey, six offered no comments. Of those who did, nearly one-quarter (24%) said that there was nothing that they would change. However, 15 of the 37 parents who offered comments (41%), requested weekend hours or more hours.

Comments include the following:

Have the place open six days a week so the kids have something to do on the weekends instead of mall hopping.

I wish Cookie Cart could open on the weekends so students have more time to pursue afterschool activities.

For my son to have more work hours and for the Cookie Cart to be open on the weekends.

The hours because it will give her a chance to learn more skills and give her more experience. It will also get her ready for a better job when she leaves the Cookie Cart.

Other comments made by three or fewer respondents follow:

Expand to other cities and neighborhoods.

The location or build another one over South Minneapolis.

More advertisement. Contact large companies. [Gain] more exposure to suburban companies. Overall exposure to what the Cookie Cart is all about outside of North Minneapolis.

More advertisements in the North News on specials and discounts and other neighborhood news papers.

The communication level of change in hours worked or when the bakery will be open. My child gets picked up and when she was notified on the day that her shift would be ending one-half hour later caused her to wait outside the workplace. Notification via voicemail to parents ahead of time would be great.

Better schedule. Stick to the schedule. If an employee comes in they should not be sent home. Parent should be contacted if child is sent home.

Have more people available [at the register] so the customer does not have to worry about whether or not there is some customer service.

Raise the age limit [so they] stay longer as they get older. Have a management program.

Better schedules. They are too small you can't really read them.

Give a card with the money on it and stop giving out checks.

Outside seating.

Of the 64 youth who participated in the survey, four offered no comments. Of those who did, 15 percent said they would not change anything. However, of the 60 youth who offered comments 12 or (20%), wanted to do their work faster, 8 or (13%) wanted to get to know their co-workers better and five or (8%) wanted to come to work more often.

Examples of what youth said are below:

If I could improve one thing about my work experience at the Cookie Cart, it would be to increase my speed when I am packing an order. I tend to take my time when packing and that's not always good.

One thing that I know I need to improve is talking more with others and being more open.

I will try to bond new relationships with employees that I have not met. I would want to improve this skill because I am a shy person.

If I could improve one thing about my work experience it would be my attendance and ability to listen. I feel like those two things really dragged me down while working. I really want to improve so I can become a better employee.

My attendance. I know how important it is to be on time and professional to be there all the days you are scheduled to work. It shows consistency.

Other comments made by three or fewer respondents include the following:

It will probably be more tasks to do because you run out of things to do. If we had more to do to keep me busy.

My cashier experience because many of the jobs out there that are hiring require cashier experience.

Customer service is what I want to improve. I still get nervous and it's hard for me to keep track of how to use the cash register, since I don't touch it much.

If I would change something, it would be how the tasks are given out. There would be a list of what you should complete by day's end.

I would get a suggestion box to put on the front counter.

If I could change one thing, it would be the variety of work there is and how organized the jobs are. Everyone does whatever and is not specifically assigned.

If I could improve one thing here it would be to have more non-routine [tasks] rather than the same thing every single day.

The one thing that I would improve on is making decisions on my own. When I really don't know something I am so quick to ask one of my supervisors; Ms. Boyd or Ms. Richardson. I think I need to improve that.

The amount of work should be a lot more daily.

I would probably change the hours I work. I would love to work more hours like gain days in the week or working on weekends.

Conclusions and issues to consider

The results of this year's Cookie Cart survey show that both parents and youth place a high value on the program. Parents and youth value it for the employment and social skills training it provides, and for the increased job readiness that they feel the training and work experience provides. Forty-one percent of parents would like Cookie Cart to expand its hours to weekends for their children to have more access to work. Youth also benefit from working closely with their peer group, value the training they receive to prepare them for future employment, and feel well supported by staff and the environment. This year, positive changes in youth skills and attitudes are similar to those seen in the 2009 cohort. Changes were most often reported by males, older youth, and those who had participated in the program for one year or more.

While the program does not appear to have its major impact on participants' enthusiasm for school or grades, 46 percent of this year's youth report increased enthusiasm for school compared to 32 percent in 2009. Similarly, more youth spent time this year than last, thinking about or preparing for college (57% in 2010 vs. 49% in 2009). Sixty-five percent of parents also believe it produces an interest in post-secondary training and educational experiences.

Overall, the findings of the survey suggest that Cookie Cart continues to be successful in helping North Minneapolis youth gain work experiences, positive relationships with adults in a work setting, positive team experiences while working, and solid leadership

experiences. Longer work experiences with Cookie Cart result in more positive benefits for youth.

Changes in survey results from year one to year five of the evaluation

This year's youth (82%) are consistent in reporting increased feelings of being ready to find and keep a job after working at Cookie Cart and this rating has increased or remained consistent since the first evaluation. Other areas that strongly support their feelings of job readiness include working as a team, greater willingness to carry out responsibilities, feeling able to interview for a job, making good decisions, serving customers, presenting as an experienced employee, knowing how to dress for interviews, and presenting as a role model for younger youth. Additionally, a significant change from the previous study, youth reports show increased comfort talking to a potential employer (79% of 2010 youth vs. 57% of 2009 youth). There has also been a positive change in ratings related to their ability to make good decisions. Finally, the 2010 youth cohort reported greater involvement in leadership activities.

According to program staff, each evaluation study has had parents that were difficult to reach or communicate with due to non-working phone numbers or language barriers. For the 2010 cohort, staff implemented an alternative method to the telephone survey to increase input from parents. Parents were asked to complete a self-administered survey sent to them to obtain a higher response rate. The total number of respondents who completed telephone and self-administered surveys is 43, the highest of all Cookie Cart evaluation studies.

Although the increased response was a significant positive change for the program, there are some issues to consider from parent's self-ratings of their children within this cohort. Current survey results show ratings of their children's skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart, as dramatically lower than ratings in previous years. One explanation for this may be the result of having better access to conduct the survey, and with a more diverse group of parents. Another explanation may be that some parents did not know enough about the program to confidently rate their children in some skills and attitudes relative to their work. Additionally, if parents with language barriers were assisted to complete a self-administered survey, there may have been some meaning lost in the interpretation of the questions.

There are several possible ways to improve our understanding of the Cookie Cart experience. One possibility is to add survey questions regarding other program elements offered by Cookie Cart, such as the 360 life skills class, and more in depth questions about how that experience may enhance skill development and job performance. Cookie Cart may also wish to consider getting survey ratings from staff who work closely with

youth. This would involve creating specific job related questions for staff to rate, for a sample of youth participants. This could include questions about willingness to carry out responsibilities, ability to work as a team member, ability to serve as a Cart Captain, and ability to attend to details. It may also be useful to update survey questions by conducting a focus group with both youth and staff regarding current programming.

Appendix

Follow-up interviews (youth and parent)

Open ended responses (youth and parent)

Youth survey

Employee ID#: _____

COOKIE CART YOUTH SURVEY

1. Please tell us about yourself.
 - a. You are a: Male Female (CIRCLE ONE)
 - b. What grade are you in? (IF SUMMER, GRADE IN PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEAR) _____
 - c. When is your birthday? (Month/Day/Year) ____/____/____
 - d. How would you describe your race or ethnicity? _____
 - e. What is the zip code of the place where you sleep most often? _____

2. Since you started to work at Cookie Cart, has your...

	Would you say...			
	Increased,	Stayed about the same, or	Decreased?	Don't know
A. Comfort with talking to a potential employer	1	2	3	8
B. Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	1	2	3	8
C. Ability to solve problems on your own	1	2	3	8
D. Ability to manage your money	1	2	3	8
E. Ability to get along with adults	1	2	3	8
F. Self-control when frustrated or angry	1	2	3	8
G. Understanding of the consequences of your behavior	1	2	3	8
H. Willingness to carry out responsibilities	1	2	3	8
I. Enthusiasm for school	1	2	3	8
J. Ability to keep scheduled commitments	1	2	3	8
K. Skills in serving customers	1	2	3	8
L. Ability to interview for a job	1	2	3	8
M. Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	1	2	3	8
N. Willingness to help others	1	2	3	8
O. Skills in getting along with other kids	1	2	3	8
P. Involvement in leadership activities	1	2	3	8
Q. Ability to see yourself as a role model for younger kids	1	2	3	8
R. Feelings of self-esteem	1	2	3	8
S. Ability in getting along at home	1	2	3	8
T. Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	8
U. Ability to make good decisions	1	2	3	8
V. Ability to set goals	1	2	3	8

	Would you say...			
	Increased,	Stayed about the same, or	Decreased?	Don't know
W. The time you have spent thinking about/ planning for college	1	2	3	8
X. Ability to work as a team member	1	2	3	8
Y. Readiness to find and keep a job after working at The Cookie Cart	1	2	3	8

3. What is the one thing about Cookie Cart that you like most?

4. If you could improve one thing about your work experience at Cookie Cart, what would you change and why?

5. Would you say working at Cookie Cart has ...

- Hurt your grades at school, 1
- Had no impact on your grades, or, 2
- Improved your grades? 7
- Refused 7
- Don't know 8

6. When you think of your Supervisor at Cookie Cart, would you say she or he is...

- A poor teacher, 1
- An okay teacher, 2
- A good teacher or, 3
- A great teacher, 4
- Refused 7
- Don't know 8

7. Do you feel that you can ask your Supervisor for help if you need it? Would you say...

- Definitely yes,..... 1
- Probably yes,..... 2
- Probably not, or 3
- Definitely not? 4
- Refused 7
- Don't know..... 8

That is the end of the survey. Thanks for your time. We really appreciate your help.

Parent interview

Employee ID#: _____

COOKIE CART PARENT INTERVIEW

Project Code: 71245

INTRODUCTION:

Hi, (PARENT NAME). This is _____, from Cookie Cart. If it's okay with you, I'd like to ask you a few questions over the phone about your child, (YOUTH EMPLOYEE'S NAME) experience working at Cookie Cart to learn how you feel about it. It will only take a few minutes and your answers will be used to help us improve Cookie Cart. Would you be willing to participate? If this is a good time for you we can do it now.

IF PARENT IS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE NOW, BEGIN INTERVIEW.

IF NOT A CONVENIENT TIME, ARRANGE CALLBACK AND NOTE CALLBACK TIME/DATE ON FACESHEET.

IF PARENT REFUSES TO BE INTERVIEWED NOTE CIRCUMSTANCES ON FACESHEET AND PUT IN REFUSAL FOLDER.

Thank you for your time.

**COOKIE CART
PARENT INTERVIEW**

1. I am going to ask you a series of question about your child. Our goal is to understand ways that he/she has changed as a result of his/her employment at Cookie Cart.

Since working at Cookie Cart, has your son's or daughter's...	Would you say...			
	Increased,	Stayed about the same, or	Decreased?	Don't know
A. Comfort with talking to a potential employer	1	2	3	8
B. Ability to present himself/herself as an experienced employee	1	2	3	8
C. Ability to solve problems on his/her own	1	2	3	8
D. Ability to manage his/her money	1	2	3	8
E. Ability to get along with other adults	1	2	3	8
F. Self-control when frustrated or angry	1	2	3	8
G. Understanding of the consequences of their behavior	1	2	3	8
H. Willingness to carry out responsibilities	1	2	3	8
I. Enthusiasm for school	1	2	3	8
J. Ability to keep scheduled commitments	1	2	3	8
K. Skills in serving customers	1	2	3	8
L. Ability to interview for a job	1	2	3	8
M. Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	1	2	3	8
N. Willingness to help others	1	2	3	8
O. Skills in getting along with other kids	1	2	3	8
P. Involvement in leadership activities	1	2	3	8
Q. Ability to see himself/herself as a role model for younger kids	1	2	3	8
R. Feelings of self-esteem	1	2	3	8
S. Ability in getting along at home	1	2	3	8
T. Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	8
U. Ability to make good decisions	1	2	3	8
V. Ability to set goals	1	2	3	8
W. Time spent thinking about /planning for college	1	2	3	8
X. Ability to work as a team member	1	2	3	8
Y. Readiness to find and keep a job after working at The Cookie Cart	1	2	3	8

3. What is the one thing about Cookie Cart that you like the most?

4. If you could improve one thing about Cookie Cart, what would you change and why?

5. Since your child started working at Cookie Cart, would you say your son's/daughter's grades in school have....

- Gotten worse, 1
- Stayed the same, 2
- Improved a little, or 3
- Improved a lot? 4
- Refused 7
- Don't know 8

That is the end of the survey. Thanks for your time. We really appreciate your help.

Youth open-ended responses

What is the one thing about Cookie Cart that you like the most?

My co-workers

I would say meeting all the new people and training them.

Working with others. Learning new things.

I like how people get along and how social people are.

Working with other co-workers and also scooping, packing orders and dealing with customers.

How comfortable I feel speaking with my peers and customers.

The employees. [I like] That everybody is respectable and kind to one another. [There are] never really any disagreements with each other. Everybody works as a team.

I like working with other people because meeting people around the neighborhood has been really interesting.

I like the people here and the atmosphere.

What I like most is just working with the adults and teenagers and learning more about working.

One thing I like is the people. The people here are funny.

When you work, you get to talk to other people and make friends, so you are not isolated.

[I like] That you can work with others and be you.

[I like] That you can talk and get to know everyone. [You can] pretty much converse.

The one thing about the Cookie Cart that I like is that I can talk to others with them listening and I can make friends. I also like the Cookie Cart because the people I work with and talk to listen to what is on my mind.

I like that I can work with other kids that are my age. Meet new people.

The one thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is the people I work with. They make coming to work that much easier and more fun.

The one thing I like about the Cookie Cart is the people I work with.

I like working with employees that have the same interests as I do.

The people with their positive attitudes.

One thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is the team work us teens share.

Seeing teenagers get along.

I like the experience of being able to work with teens my age.

The one I like about the Cookie Cart is my team because we laugh, work together and get along.

One thing about the Cookie Cart I enjoy most is the employees that I have encountered.

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is meeting new people and I get to see my co-workers.

The one thing I like most at the Cookie Cart is all of the people here who are ready to work.

The one I like about the Cookie Cart is my team because we laugh, work together and get along.

The managers

That the employers are very concerned of their employees well being.

I would say the managers. Not most would advocate and make exceptions and also see my full potential like they do.

I like the employers and the employers comfort levels and entertainment.

The one thing that I like the most is the staff because they are so easy going but they don't play about getting work done.

Having a boss who is so easy to talk to. I have a feeling I won't always have the opportunity to experience that in every job.

My bosses.

The staff is very friendly and helpful. Not just with work, but with personal problems.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is my managers. They make me feel more than welcome.

How all the staff are very respectful to you and customers.

The "bosses" are very outgoing and understanding.

The staff and the way you get to have fun at working and when you are late you get a pass.

Thank you nice women for letting me work here.

360 and other classes

The 360 class because it better prepared me for work.

I like that they let me take the paid training class that prepared me for my next job.

I like that they have classes to teach you how to be a better worker and show you how to manage your money. The classes basically.

Cookie Cart experience

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is that it prepares you for future jobs. The Cookie Cart has taught me so many things I did not know. The Cookie Cart is such a good experience.

Working with other co-workers and also scooping, packing orders and dealing with customers.

The one thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is how everybody is kind and treats everybody equally.

I like how the Cookie Cart supports youth. It gets them ready for the real world and shows them how to get and maintain a job. It gives them the skills that they will need in the future like responsibility and money management.

I like the most how the Cookie Cart gives teens a chance, sort of like a way out to do something with ourselves.

The fact that we slowly progress and earn our extra hours and more days. You can get along with people that work here easily and everybody's nice.

The one thing I like about the Cookie Cart is the fact that it helps me get along with my peers and getting me ready for the job world outside of Cookie Cart.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is cleaning and packing cookies.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is cleaning and packing cookies.

The positive attitudes and the continuous opportunities.

That they take the time to teach us and prepare us for the job world and provide classes that will increase our job skill knowledge.

I like how we work in a group and scooping cookies.

Helps us learn what I need for a job in the future.

I like scooping up the cookies.

The thing I like about the Cookie Cart is all the opportunities you get to become a better employee and to become better prepared for other jobs.

It teaches us how to be responsible and reliable people.

Packing and decorating the cookies.

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is having that feeling of knowing I have other responsibilities to maintain.

One thing about the Cookie Cart that I like most is processing the cookie dough.

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is having more experience and meeting new people.

One thing I like is when I am on top of my game and I am happy and everybody else is.

Going on sale events. The opportunity to get out of the building and interact with other people and have fun selling cookies.

Helping people with things they need help with.

Break time and sales events.

I like how the Cookie Cart is a helpful way to experience a job, yet it's still something that is not too much for an adolescent to handle. The "bosses" are very outgoing and understanding. Overall, I like how everyone has a positive attitude.

Coming to work on time and having a good opportunity to work here.

The environment

The social environment and the people that work here.

The ability to be ourselves and not strictly work, work, work.

One thing about the Cookie Cart that I like the most is that you could be yourself without getting judged.

I like that the Cookie Cart is all about helping teenagers; focusing on teens.

What I like about the Cookie Cart is that I am able to work in an environment of youth and to an achievable level of confidence. I have learned things school never taught me.

I like how the Cookie Cart is a helpful way to experience a job, yet it's still something that is not too much for an adolescent to handle. The "bosses" are very outgoing and understanding. Overall, I like how everyone has a positive attitude.

I like the people here and the atmosphere.

The way everybody gets along.

One thing that I like about the Cookie Cart is that there are friendly people.

People are really nice and friendly here. There is no drama and it's nice to come here after school and be around people that are drama free. I also like the fast pace and the hard working people.

The cookies

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is the cookies. The cookies taste GREAT.

I also like eating the fresh baked cookies.

The decorated cookies.

One thing I like about the Cookie Cart is the M & M cookies.

If you could improve one thing about your work experience at Cookie Cart what would you change and why?

Improvement in skills

I would improve customer service. I think I need to work on that so I can be more available when customer service is needed.

If I can improve on thing about my work experience, I would improve on the task to stay on. I think that because if nobody says anything to me and I start on one thing, then next thing I'm doing something else.

One thing I would improve about my work experience is packing and remembering where all the stuff is.

To be a better Cookie Cart Captain, learn better and stop asking questions all the time.

One thing I would change about my work experience at Cookie Cart is my confidence when I pack orders. I get nervous because I might make a mistake and that I need to memorize the box size.

Customer service is what I want to improve. I still get nervous and it's hard for me to keep track of how to use the cash register, since I don't touch it much.

My cashier experience because many of the jobs out there that are hiring require cashier experience.

Try to improve on all tasks that are given.

I would change how I can manage my money.

I would improve on staying on track because sometimes I can get a little too much talkative.

If I could improve one thing, I would try to have more confidence when it comes to customer service.

If I could improve one thing it would be communication skills.

Learning how to use the cash register.

Working faster

Get my work done fast because sometimes I feel like I move slowly.

One thing I would improve would be the way I pack cookies so I could work faster at that and do it right.

I would improve my speed because we would finish the job faster and go home early.

It would be my ability to do and complete tasks at a higher rate.

I would improve moving faster at what I am doing and coming to work.

If I could improve one thing about my work experience at the Cookie Cart, it would be to increase my speed when I am packing an order. I tend to take my time when packing and that's not always good.

I would try to work faster at all times.

Change in hours/scheduling

I would probably change the hours I work. I would love to work more hours like gain days in the week or working on weekends.

I would improve my schedule and the way I manage it.

I would improve the hours so I get more money on days that I can only make because I am getting so busy now.

Understanding my schedule better.

Relating to my co-workers

I would change my experience to be more social and talkative amongst my peers.

Talking to kids more often.

One thing I would like to change is making good communication with people because one day I would be doing customer service.

I would socialize more than how I normally do.

I will try to bond new relationships with employees that I have not met. I would want to improve this skill because I am a shy person.

I should talk more to everyone and don't be shy because if I start talking, maybe it will help me to talk to random people and be active.

Being more social because people might think I am a stuck up person.

One thing that I know I need to improve is talking more with others and being more open. I know that being quiet isn't going to get me nowhere.

One thing I would change is not being really shy at times to others. I want to change that because I want to get along with others.

If I could improve one thing, I would improve on talking more.

I improved on working better with others around me. The Cookie Cart is a big involvement in working with others.

Problem solve

To take care of my own problems and my questions when I know they are easy.

The one thing that I would improve on is making decisions on my own. When I really don't know something I am so quick to ask one of my supervisors; Ms. Boyd or Ms. Richardson. I think I need to improve that.

Figure things out for myself.

Attendance

If I could improve one thing about my work experience it would be my attendance. I feel like that really dragged me down while working. I really want to improve so I can become a better employee.

Attendance. Even though I am on time now I wasn't so mindful when I first started.

The one thing I would improve is my timing because when I first started I wasn't as on time as I should have been.

I would improve my attendance and my working.

I would change my attendance performance because being on time shows reliability.

My attendance. I know how important it is to be on time and professional to be there all the days you are scheduled to work. It shows consistency.

I would change my attendance because I have been written up for it.

Coming to work.

Overall attitude and behavior

My attitude 'cause it hurts people.

I will change my behavior.

If I could improve one thing it would be to improve my attitude.

I guess I would have to say being able to just accept some things instead of always trying to talk my way back even if it's right or wrong.

Less talking out of my mouth and more work.

Me talking because I think when I talk I get off track and lose time.

How I decided to give up and not be able to keep myself focused and I left.

If I could improve one thing about my work experience it would be my ability to listen. I feel like that really dragged me down while working. I really want to improve so I can become a better employee.

Work behavior/attitude

Be prepared and ready to work.

To be a bit busier so finding a task can be quicker.

I would change my work experience and also my ways.

I will change and try my hardest to be successful.

I can improve on helping people more and do more things.

Improve work structure

The amount of work should be a lot more daily.

If I could improve one thing here it would be to have more non-routine tasks rather than the same thing every single day.

If I would change something, it would be how the tasks are given out. There would be a list of what you should complete by day's end.

It will probably be more tasks to do because you run out of things to do. If we had more to do to keep me busy.

If I could change one thing, it would be the variety of work there is and how organized the jobs are. Everyone does whatever and is not specifically assigned.

Other

Getting to work with my sister. I want to know what it is like.

I would get more involved in the community; get the Cookie Cart's name heard more.

I would change how I left instead of talking my problems out with my supervisors.

Steady breaks of one hour or forty-five minutes.

More fun classes. They cover all the core things but, like something new like driver's education.

The thing I would change is the space. Sometimes we get stuck.

I would get a suggestion box to put on the front counter.

One thing that I think would help at the Cookie Cart would be to have more help with the cashier.

If I could improve on anything it would be able to [continue] work. Because I never really had a chance to come to work and be consistent as I can.

No change

I would change nothing. I feel this is as close as you're going to get to a real job especially if it's your first.

I wouldn't want to change anything because everything is fine the way it is now.

I wouldn't change a lot. In the time I have spent here it is hard to specify anything I would change.

I wouldn't change anything because they're covering everything already.

I would say nothing because I don't think I am doing bad on anything.

I don't think there is anything that I need more help with at the Cookie Cart.

Parent open-ended responses

What is the one thing about Cookie Cart that you like the most?

Good job experience

One thing that I like the most about the Cookie Cart is that it provides young teenagers a good start to working.

My daughter's opportunity to become employed at Cookie Cart's personable, supportive, youth program, while developing strategies for her speech and earning income. Thanks to Taronda Richardson and Sony Boyd.

The way they teach the youth employees.

It helps the kids learn how to be workers.

Flexibility, easy going, accountable responsibility and respect for others. A good working environment that teaches good work habits.

It helped my child to become a more talkative person. It also helped my child experience how a real job feels.

The skills the youth are learning to prepare them for the work field.

That they [youth] are able to make their own money, appreciate and actually work for it. I like the knowledge and experience of a first job.

Having a job.

I like that my child is learning skills that she can take with her beyond Cookie Cart.

My child has started to work as a young lady.

Gives young kids job training.

Giving her the opportunity to work with co-workers of her age. Understanding at that age (slightly older) that she can also be a manager, supervisor and training. She can have greater responsibilities and she enjoys the product.

They are giving my daughter a good experience of a first job.

It allows my child to carry out responsibilities and present leadership as a role model.

Teaching kids what a job is.

The environment

The only employer to employ youth after school all year long. The only organization that keeps youth employed.

It [Cookie Cart] takes time out for the teens to learn and get ready as an adult as well as get job ready.

Youth involvement surroundings.

Teaching my child to be responsible.

Help my kid become a better person.

A good place to train young people.

It gives a positive place for my kid to be.

There is close supervision. It has structure. It is not just some employer trying to make money.

The motivation they give to the kids.

Teaching young people to work with others.

It is a program to help kids with work experience.

The staff

The one thing about the Cookie Cart I like the most is the polite and nice staff.

The good people because they take care of my son and teach him things.

The polite staff.

Very good employers to my son. How sweet they are to my son.

They are good people because they take care of my son and teach him things.

Gives youth a chance

Helping young kids in the neighborhood.

That they are just here to help kids that may need it the most.

Helping kids.

Their willingness to work with kids.

Taking time with the kids.

The Cookies

The peanut butter cookies are the best especially after being bought fresh and how well organized the employees are.

The cookies are extremely tasty.

Good cookies.

Other

Cookie Cart calling for my parent feedback.

The independence and responsibilities.

My daughter enjoys working there and she's happy.

One thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is that my daughter can get along with others and wants to come to work to help others.

The age group of youth employers.

If you could improve one thing about Cookie Cart what would you change and why?

Extension of employee and store hours

Have the place open 6 days a week so the kids have something to do on the weekends instead of mall hopping.

I want my son to work longer.

For my son to have more work hours and for the Cookie Cart to be open on the weekends.

If it would open on the weekends.

Maybe giving the kids more hours.

Hours and scheduling because my daughter would like more hours.

I wish Cookie Cart could open on the weekends so students have more time to pursue afterschool activities.

More hours.

The number of hours.

Give her a chance to prove she can have more responsibilities by giving her more than one day a week. Sometimes it's nothing a week.

The hours. Open on weekends. More money.

Longer hours – not sure why though.

The hours because it will give her a chance to learn more skills and give her more experience. It will also get her ready for a better job when she leaves the Cookie Cart.

Increase age for Cookie Cart participation

Raise the age limit so they stay longer as they get older. Have a management program.

Consider an extension of employment to 18 ¼ year olds. My daughter can complete her senior year in high school. (just an idea for variance) As a guardian grandma, I appreciate the “gift” of the Cookie Cart opportunity from my heart and soul!

Expansion/location change

Expand to other cities and neighborhoods.

The location because she doesn't like the neighborhood.

Marketing

More advertisements in the North News on specials and discounts and other neighborhood news papers.

Getting the word out more!

More advertisement. Contact large companies. Gain more exposure to suburban companies. Overall exposure to what the Cookie Cart is all about outside of North Minneapolis.

Improved scheduling/parent communication

Better schedule. Stick to the schedule. If an employee comes in they should not be sent home. Parent should be contacted if child is sent home.

Better schedules. They are too small you can't really read them.

The communication level of change in hours worked or when the bakery will be open. My child gets picked up and when she was notified on the day that her shift would be ending one-half hour later caused her to wait outside the workplace. Notification via voicemail to parents ahead of time would be great.

Checks/payment

Better payment.

It would be better if they get paid every week.

I need to understand the money in the check. Also more time for working because she likes to work there.

Give a card with the money on it and stop giving out checks.

Other

I would like Cookie cart to get more chores? for my daughter.

Outside seating.

Communication with parents.

The people at the register. Have more people available so the customer does not have to worry about whether or not there is some customer service.

No change

If I could improve one thing about the Cookie Cart, it will be nothing. You guys are already doing a good job of teaching my daughter to be prepared for the workforce.

Nothing. Everything is great.

It is fine the way it is.

Nothing much to improve on but I hope that she is confident with working with others and meeting new people.