

# **Cookie Cart**

An evaluation of a youth work experience and empowerment program

JULY 2012

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# **Contents**

Introduction	1
Overview of the Cookie Cart program	1
Purpose and methodology of this report	3
2011-2012 survey results	5
Youth survey results	5
2011-2012 parent survey results	13
Recommendations for improvement	18
Conclusions and issues to consider	20
Appendix	23
Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes	24
Youth open-ended responses	26
Parent open-ended responses	32
Youth survey	35
Parent interview	37

# **Figures**

1.	Number of participating youth and parents completing surveys	4
2.	Characteristics of 2011-2012 youth survey participants	5
3a.	Significant improvements in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart	6
3b.	Slightly improved or maintained skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart	7
3c.	Decline in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart	8
3d.	Skills and attitudes related to school that have stayed the same during employment at Cookie Cart	9
4.	Best aspects of Cookie Cart work experience for youth	9
5a.	Parent perspective: Significant improvements in skills and attitudes during child's employment at Cookie Cart	4
5b.	Parent perspective: Slight improvement or decrease in skills and attitudes during child's employment at Cookie Cart	5
6a.	Similar ratings between parents and youth regarding changes in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart	
6b.	Different ratings between parents and youth regarding changes in skills and attitude during employment at Cookie Cart	
7.	What parents liked most about the Cookie Cart program	6

# **Acknowledgments**

The authors of this report would like to thank the staff of Cookie Cart for their contributions toward the evaluation of the youth employment program.

We would also like to thank Cookie Cart project managers and directors for their help collecting survey data from participants and providing descriptive information needed to prepare and complete this report:

Matt Halley Taronda Richardson Leah Jasper

Thank you to the staff at Wilder Research who provided their assistance with the project:

Mark Anton Jennifer Bohlke Ryan McArdle Jessica Meyerson Stephanie Nelson-Dusek Greg Owen

# Introduction

# Overview of the Cookie Cart program

Cookie Cart is a nonprofit employment program that serves youth living in or near North Minneapolis. This is an area that has high unemployment rates, 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, ages 15 through 17, an opportunity to develop life, interpersonal, leadership, and transferable job skills through training and employment at a retail and commercial bakery. The Bakery Program provides a first paid job experience for youth and helps participants gain the skills necessary to transition to traditional employment in the community.

One thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is that it's not just a bakery. It's actually a doorway to the future as in jobs, college, etc., and we get to learn life skills in the 360 class.

- Youth participant

There are five separate trainings offered by Cookie Cart to support youth's employment experience. These trainings are described below.

## **Bakery Program**

The Bakery Program teaches basic employment skills including appropriate workplace behavior, problem solving, teamwork, time management, following instructions, and completing tasks.

## 360 Degrees

360 Degrees is a comprehensive workforce-readiness classroom training that teaches job preparation skills, including resume writing, preparing for interviews, and job searching. This training helps youth develop the essential skills needed to find and keep traditional jobs.

## **Customer Service Training**

Cookie Cart employees that have worked for a minimum of 90 days, and have completed a performance evaluation, are eligible to participate in customer service training. For six weeks, youth work through an age- and culture-appropriate curriculum called Customer Service Training in a classroom setting. Youth learn how to develop the interpersonal

communication skills they need to professionally serve their customers. Employees who complete the training are able to use their new skills in the Cookie Cart store, as well as during store promotional or sales events.

## **Financial Literacy**

Cookie Cart has a partnership with Thrivent Financial and M & I Bank to work with youth twice monthly during a two-hour course that addresses checking and savings accounts, balancing accounts, budgeting, and credit. Pre- and post-tests are administered to identify what youth already know at the beginning of new sessions, and at the end of the course to test their new knowledge.

### **National Career Readiness Certification**

In partnership with the Minnesota Workforce Center, Cookie Cart supports youth as they participate in a training and test preparation process called the National Career Readiness Certification. This is an assessment developed by the ACT Corporation that helps businesses measure their employees' job skills, including applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information, all of which are essential to employment success.

The Cookie Cart allows youth to expand their experience further than just making cookies. It also teaches discipline and advanced writing, math, and reading skills.

- Youth participant

In addition to the trainings, Cookie Cart provides an opportunity for youth employees to advance as a result of demonstrating their leadership strengths. A description of this opportunity follows.

### **Cookie Cart Captains**

Cookie Cart offers eligible (90-day employment) youth an opportunity to develop and strengthen job skills through a promotion to Cart Captain. This position is earned by youth who have demonstrated leadership skills in the Bakery Program by engaging in peer-to-peer learning experiences. This peer-to-peer learning involves working with coworkers as a team, and learning from one another.

Cart Captains are initially trained by program 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 a responsibility to help peers follow baking area guidelines, by keeping the

products and environment clean and free from contaminants, and then report back to program staff about the progress of their peers. Additionally, Cart Captains work with new employees to ensure that customer service standards are met.

Cookie Cart program 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.

I like that I have more leadership, and as I grow as a person and employee, I see it in myself and my supervisors see it too.

-Youth participant

# Purpose and methodology of this report

In order to assess the effectiveness of the Cookie Cart strategy in helping youth gain employment skills, Cookie Cart contracted with Wilder Research to design and evaluate 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. These surveys describe participants' 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 or self-administered survey after their child has been employed for a minimum of 90 days at Cookie Cart.

This report summarizes the results of surveys completed by youth and their parents over the last two years. In the current year (2011-2012), youth participation decreased slightly compared to the previous year, while parent participation decreased significantly.

According to program staff, the fluctuation of youth survey participation numbers could be attributed to when they are hired during the year. The hiring process is ongoing, though youth apply for work when they are available. Staff added that they experience a peak time for hiring youth during the fall months. Youth survey participation numbers can vary depending on how many are already in the program and how many newly enter the program.

Program staff have reported a variety of challenges in their attempts to survey parents during all study periods. This year, program staff mentioned a few possible explanations for the decline, including families moving out of the North Minneapolis area, parents being less interested in employment skills training and placing more value on their child just having a paid job, and parents' limited familiarity with new management staff. Moreover, program staff reported that some parents demonstrated more willingness to participate in

the survey once they had bonded with Cookie Cart program staff through regular checkins regarding their children.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of youth and parent survey participation during year five and year six.

## 1. Number of participating youth and parents completing surveys

	Year 6 (2011-2012)	Year 5 (2010)
Number of youth	57	64
Number of parents	27	43

Participating youth completed their surveys on-site at the Cookie Cart facility. In 2011-2012, program staff reported that, in addition to their volunteers conducting telephone interviews with parents, self-administered surveys were sent to parents as in year five. All surveys were returned to Wilder Research for review and analysis.

# 2011-2012 survey results

# Youth survey results

The 2011-2012 survey included youth who have participated in the program for at least three months and up to three years. Approximately 60 percent of the respondents were female. The majority (89%) of youth were in the 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Fifty-nine percent of the youth surveyed were African American, the largest participant group during all evaluation years. Twenty percent surveyed were Hmong, 11 percent were mixed race, 9 percent were Asian, and 2 percent were Latino. One person did not identify their race or ethnicity. This year's results show a dramatic increase in the percentage of Hmong youth participants since the fifth year of the evaluation (20% in year six, 6% in year five). Also, the percentage for mixed race youth participants increased slightly (11%, 6%).

According to program staff, there are no recruitment goals to target specific racial or ethnic groups in the Bakery Program. Therefore, it is not known why there is fluctuation in the percentages of some races, particularly the dramatic fluctuation of Hmong participants.

The following figure shows a complete breakdown of youth characteristics for this year's study period.

## 2. Characteristics of 2011-2012 youth survey participants (N=57)

Characteristic	Percent
Female	61%
Male	39%
8th grade	2%
9th grade	19%
10th grade	35%
11th grade	32%
12th grade	12%
African American	59%
Hmong	20%
Mixed racial background	11%
Asian	9%
Latino	2%
	Female  Male  8th grade  9th grade  10th grade  11th grade  12th grade  African American  Hmong  Mixed racial background  Asian

## Skills and attitudes of youth

In 2011-2012, as in previous years, youth were asked questions about their skills and attitudes and whether they thought these skills and attitudes had increased, stayed the same, or decreased during their period of employment with Cookie Cart. Tables 3a-3d show trends over the last two evaluation periods for youth participants.

#### Significant improvements in skills and attitudes during employment at 3a. **Cookie Cart**

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Current study Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64
Self-control when frustrated or angry	61%	48%
Feelings of self-esteem	61%	47%

The percentage of youth reporting positive changes in self-esteem and self-control when feeling frustrated or angry increased by over 10 percentage points from the previous survey (self-esteem: +14 percentage points, self-control: +13 percentage points).

According to comments made by youth, improved feelings of self-esteem stem from a holistic experience that includes the trainings, peer learning, and a safe and nurturing environment. Comments reflect youth growing into themselves, building self-esteem, maturing and growing and having others notice, feeling comfortable with their peers and the environment, and learning skills that will help in the future.

Figure 3b illustrates youth self ratings of job readiness strengths that have slightly improved or stayed about the same during the last two years. For those skills and attitudes where youth self-ratings increased, the difference between ratings from year five to year six is under 10 percentage points.

# 3b. Slightly improved or maintained skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Current study Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64
Comfort talking to a potential employer	86%	79%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	86%	81%
Ability to work as a team member	84%	84%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	83%	82%
Ability to interview for a job	82%	75%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	79%	75%
Willingness to help others	77%	71%
Skills in serving customers	76%	76%
Skills in getting along with other kids	75%	66%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	66%	66%
Ability to get along with adults	61%	61%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	61%	53%

Figure 3c breaks down the skills and attitudes where youth showed slight to significant decline in their ratings; the top four skills and attitudes in the chart are highlighted for their significant change. This year, fewer youth reported that they were able to make good decisions (66% in year six, 79% in year five), manage their own money (56%, 73%), solve problems on their own (54%, 67%), and get involved in leadership activities (51%, 71%), than in the previous year.

## 3c. Decline in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Current study Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64
Ability to make good decisions	66%	79%
Ability to manage own money	56%	73%
Ability to solve problems on own	54%	67%
Involvement in leadership activities	51%	71%
Ability to see yourself as a role model for younger youth	70%	75%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	70%	75%
Ability to set goals	70%	74%
Understanding the consequences of your behavior	66%	72%

Possible explanations for the change in ratings for making good decisions could be learned from open-ended comments made by youth about what they wanted to change about themselves during their work experience. Some mentioned uncertainty about how to determine what is wrong and what is right, not being focused on their tasks, not being committed to or responsible for their work, and lack of motivation.

According to program staff, a possible reason for the observed decline in youth's ability to solve problems on their own may be attributed to the fact that they are always paired with another person, especially when there is a large employment team. This may also account for the observed decline in respondents' perceived involvement in leadership activities. However, year-to-year variations are seen in these responses and current values for most indicators fall within a reasonable range.

# 3d. Skills and attitudes related to school that have stayed the same during employment at Cookie Cart

### Percent reporting positive changes

	Current study		
Skills and attitudes	Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64	
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	54%	57%	
Enthusiasm for school	37%	46%	
Getting along at home	28%	34%	

In the current year, self-ratings on the time youth spent thinking about or planning for college remained about the same from year five (54% in year six, 57% in year five). Youth ratings for school enthusiasm, however, declined by nine percentage points. There is no information in the data to inform why ratings have fluctuated during the last two years.

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, it is important to consider that they do represent activities and interests that are relevant to the long-term success of youth.

## Best aspects of Cookie Cart work experience for youth

To learn more about what it is like to be a Cookie Cart youth employee, program participants were asked to say, in their own words, what they liked most about Cookie Cart. Fifty-six participants provided comments, which have been categorized and are shown below:

## 4. Best aspects of Cookie Cart work experience for youth

	Number	Percent
Working with peers, other teens	31	55%
Cookie Cart trainings (360 Degrees, customer service, life skills)	13	25%
A good job experience	6	11%
The environment	5	9%
The managers or supervisors	5	9%
The cookies (preparation, eating them)	5	9%

**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 were mentioned by three or fewer respondents include activities such as customer service and participating in sales events. Some of these benefits were more personal, such as becoming more mature, growing, being a leader, being happy, and the opportunities and experiences gained for their future.

The following comments are illustrative:

## Working with peers/Working as a team

What I like most about the Cookie Cart is that I work with teens who are around my age. It is easy to communicate with the adults here.

The one thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is everyone's ability to work together as a team and treat each other like family.

I like working as a team. It helped me with my communication skills a lot, understanding how to get along with everyone.

I like that I've been given the ability to grow as a person and mature. I also like that the people around me notice. I like being around my peers and people like me. It's a comfortable place for me.

## **Trainings**

One thing that I like most about the Cookie Cart is the work readiness programs. Through these programs, I have improved a lot of things as an employee.

The Cookie Cart allows youth to expand their experience further than just making cookies. It also teaches discipline and advanced writing, math, and reading skills.

What I like most about Cookie Cart is the 360 class, because it teaches you what to do after this job and how to get a good job.

The thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is the 360 degree class. It is fun and really helpful about job experience – like how to apply for a job, fill out an application, and what to do for an interview.

I like the programs that they give us such as customer service, 360, and more. I've learned many things that will help me in the future.

## Good job experience/environment

The one thing that I love the most is gaining ownership. This means taking responsibility for actions, and knowing how to handle a situation properly. Also, I like learning how to become a leader.

I find working here relaxing. It's pretty much something to look forward to. I like the self independence to fulfill my responsibility and I really enjoy it.

One out of a lot of things about Cookie Cart that I like the most is being able to do customer service. Meeting people, and even in the bakery, being able to work with the new employee that was maybe once a customer.

I love to do customer service. Helping people is fun for me.

### The cookies

I like the cookies that Cookie Cart employees make. ©

There are a lot of things I like at the Cookie Cart. But, one thing is pressing cookie dough. I think it is fun and a good experience for me.

## **Perceptions of supervisors**

As in earlier evaluation years, youth were asked about their perceptions of the supervisors as teachers. Consistently across all years, youth have placed high value on the relationships they have with their Cookie Cart supervisors. When youth in the current year were asked for their opinions, 74 percent reported that their supervisor was a great teacher. Additionally, 93 percent said that they probably or definitely could seek the help of their supervisors if they needed it.

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

One thing that I love the most about the Cookie Cart is that they make sure things are clear and understood.

I like the kindness of the employers and the opportunity to work for wages.

I like how the adults and teens work together to have a safe and friendly environment.

The way they show you how to be respectful.

Most of the staff are friendly, so there's always somebody to help.

They tell me when I'm doing something wrong and they help me.

I like that I have more leadership, and as I grow as a person, and employee, I see it in myself and my supervisors see it too.

I like the bosses at the Cookie Cart.

It is easy to communicate with the adults here.

I love the energy Ms. Boyd brings to the kitchen.

## Impact on grades

As in previous years, youth were asked whether they believed their work experience at Cookie Cart had any impact on their grades in school. A majority of this year's youth (64%) said working at Cookie Cart had no impact on their grades, which is consistent with year five's findings. However, a higher percentage of youth this year (34%, compared to 26% in year five) reported that an improvement in their grades could be attributed to their Cookie Cart experience.

# Skills and attitudes 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 2011-2012 survey results show that "older youth"  $(11^{th} - 12^{th} \text{ graders})$ , compared to "younger youth"  $(8^{th} - 10^{th} \text{ graders})$ , reported more positive changes in the following skills and attitudes:

- Ability to work as a team member (96% older youth vs. 74% younger youth)
- Skills in getting along with others (92% vs. 63%)
- Ability to interview for a job (91% vs. 75%)
- Ability to present themselves as experienced employees (88% vs. 72%)
- Ability to keep scheduled commitments (75% vs. 58%)

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:

- Ability to interview for a job (97% veterans vs. 64% newcomers)
- Skills in serving customers (94% vs. 50%)

- Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart (90% vs. 74%)
- Ability to present themselves as experienced employees (87% vs. 68%)
- Knowledge of how to dress for an interview (87% vs. 50%)

Females reported more positive changes compared to males in the following skills and attitudes:

- Willingness to carry out responsibilities (97% females vs. 68% males)
- Comfort talking to a potential employer (94% vs. 73%)
- Ability to work as a team member (91% vs. 73%)
- Ability to interview for a job (91% vs. 71%)
- Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart (90% vs. 71%)

See the appendix for the complete table of the most frequently reported positive changes, in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program for the current year.

# 2011-2012 parent survey results

Parents were asked to rate the same questions regarding skills and attitudes that were asked of their participating children. Telephone and self-administered surveys were completed by 27 parents during the 2011-2012 study period. In all categories, higher percentages of parents reported that their child's skills and attitudes had changed positively during their employment at Cookie Cart, compared to last year; however, these increases should be interpreted with caution, since significantly fewer parents participated in this year's survey and the results may not reflect the views of many parents in the program (n=27 in year six, compared to n=43 in year five).

# 5a. Parent perspective: Significant improvements in skills and attitudes during child's employment at Cookie Cart

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Current study Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	89%	72%
Ability to interview for a job	88%	70%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	89%	68%
Ability to work as a team member	96%	74%
Ability to present him/herself as an experienced employee	89%	61%
Willingness to help others	89%	58%
Ability to see him/herself as a role model for younger youth	73%	57%
Skills in serving customers	96%	74%
Ability to solve problems on his/her own	85%	60%
Ability to make good decisions	82%	56%
Understanding the consequences of their behavior	92%	57%
Ability to set goals	82%	65%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	92%	78%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	85%	60%
Involvement in leadership activities	76%	42%
Skills in getting along with other kids	85%	49%
Ability to get along with adults	81%	61%
Self-control when frustrated or angry	70%	40%
Feelings of self-esteem	92%	60%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	78%	40%
Enthusiasm for school	82%	52%
Getting along at home	85%	56%

Figure 5b illustrates three skills and attitudes where ratings only slightly increased or decreased from the previous year. Parents are steady in their report about their children being prepared for work, money management, and thoughts for future education from year five to year six.

# 5b. Parent perspective: Slight improvement or decrease in skills and attitudes during child's employment at Cookie Cart

### Percent reporting positive changes

	Current study	
Skills and attitudes	Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57	Year 5 (2010) N=64
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	76%	72%
Ability to manage his/her money	73%	65%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	63%	65%

During the 2011-2012 study, similar percentages of parents and youth reported positive changes in 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. Similar ratings between parents and youth regarding changes in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Parents Year 6 (2011-2012) N=27	Youth Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	89%	86%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	89%	86%
Ability to interview for a job	88%	82%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	76%	83%
Ability to see him or herself as a role model for younger youth	73%	70%
Time spent thinking about college	63%	54%

In Figure 6b, 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. One explanation could be that parents have more knowledge about their children at home than they may have about them while they are in the Bakery Program.

# 6b. Different ratings between parents and youth regarding changes in skills and attitudes during employment at Cookie Cart

## Percent reporting positive changes

Skills and attitudes	Parents Year 6 (2011-2012) N=27	Youth Year 6 (2011-2012) N=57
Feelings of self-esteem	92%	61%
Understanding the consequences of their behavior	92%	66%
Getting along at home	85%	28%
Ability to solve problems on their own	85%	54%
Enthusiasm for school	82%	37%
Ability to get along with adults	81%	61%
Involvement in leadership activities	76%	51%

Parents were also asked to provide, in their own words, their perceptions of Cookie Cart and what they liked most about the program. Forty-two percent of parents reported that the job experience for youth was most important. Other parents liked that it was a positive place to serve teens, and that there are good cookies.

The majority of parents (24 of 27) responded to this question. Responses were categorized and are shown below.

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

	Number	Percent
Provides a good job experience for kids	10	42%
A positive place just for teens	5	21%
The cookies	4	17%
Community presence	2	8%
Giving teens a chance/opportunity	2	8%
Teaches responsibility	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 of what parents liked most:

## Good job experience

I like that young teens can get jobs.

They are teaching the kids how to open up. [I like] how Cookie Cart prepares the kids for jobs later in life. I like how it helps them become independent and how to work with others.

I like the communication and the learning abilities. I like them just being around the other teenagers, and supervisors.

[I like] how they help the young teens improve their skills for better jobs.

### **Positive environment**

I liked how the work environment was friendly and teamwork-oriented.

It is a positive work place just for teens.

It is more than one thing I love about Cookie Cart. It's hard to choose. Cleanness, cookies, friendliness, and giving young people a chance.

#### The cookies

The cookies are good.

Cookies and milk.

## **Community presence**

The Cookie Cart is great for the community because it gives teens positive opportunities to prepare for their futures.

The Cookie Cart is the best thing to ever happen to the kids on the North Side. I really love the way they talk to the youth.

## Giving teens a chance

I like their willingness to work with kids and encourage them to follow their dreams, teach them respect, and to take pride in themselves and others.

I like the way they work with teens when they are having problems – most jobs won't do that.

It gives young kids an opportunity.

## Teaches responsibility

My daughter has the ability to purchase things for herself after saving. I'm proud of her. She also helps with the support of her ten siblings with pride.

Cookie Cart teaches the teenagers responsibility.

# Recommendations for improvement

As in previous years, parents and youth were asked to comment on what might be done to strengthen or improve the Cookie Cart experience; ideas for improvements were different between parents and youth.

Of the 27 parents who participated in the survey, four offered no comments. Of those who did, more than one-third (35%) said that there was nothing that they would change. Five of the 23 parents (22%) requested weekend hours or more hours, and an additional 22 percent requested more locations to serve teens in this way.

Comments of parents include the following:

Open on weekends.

Longer hours.

More work hours for them.

I wish they could keep them in the program longer.

Give the kids more hours. Go on more trips.

Everything is okay, but they need more stores all over in Minneapolis.

More locations to help serve more teens.

## Other comments follow:

A bigger building to get more young people off the streets for something positive to do, and learn to earn an honest living.

The one thing that I would improve if I had to would be the workers getting more cookies after work.

Of the 57 youth who participated in the survey, only one did not offer any comments. Of those who did, 20 percent said they would not change anything. However, of the 56 youth who offered comments 10 (18%) wanted to improve their existing skills, or work faster, 7

(13%) wanted to get to know their co-workers better, four (7%) wanted to improve how they communicate or get along with others, and an additional seven percent wanted more hours to work.

Examples of what youth said are below:

## **Youth improvements**

One thing I can improve at Cookie Cart is being a cashier. I can change that because I still get nervous being the cashier and I got used to it after a while.

I would like to push myself more. Sometimes I find myself going at a normal pace when I can go a little faster and still get the job done well.

One thing that I can improve is decorating. Being able to do more and learn more; show what I can do.

Customer service - I just think I can do a little bit better.

One thing I need to improve is talking to others. I'm really quiet and it seems like I'm not getting to know my co-workers.

I would be more social even though not everybody has inviting conversations.

If I could improve one thing about my work experience, it would be to interact with all the employees. It's because I don't get to work on different days, so I get to work with the same people for about a month.

One thing I would change is my talking experience. I would change it because I don't really communicate.

The way I communicate with other co-workers.

The way I talk to people. Some people take it in a bad way.

I would change talking too loud and screaming, because I talk very loud and scream a lot.

## **Cookie Cart improvements**

I will give more work days so kids can get a little more money.

I would change how many work hours we get because I think we don't get enough.

# Conclusions and issues to consider

Survey results of year six show that both parents and youth find Cookie Cart's employment program to be extremely beneficial. As in previous study periods, parents and youth value Cookie Cart for the social skills, work experience and training – and resulting feeling of job readiness – that the experience provides.

2011-2012 survey results showed the following highlights:

- Parents would like Cookie Cart to expand its hours to weekends or generally provide more hours for their children to have more access to work (22%).
- Parents would like to see the program replicated in other locations so other teens can be served (22%).
- Youth ratings consistently show that they benefit from working closely with their peer group.
- Youth also benefit from the trainings they receive to prepare them for future employment and they feel well supported by the staff and work environment.
- This year, positive changes in youth skills and attitudes are mostly similar to those seen in the 2010 cohort.
- Changes were most often reported by females, older youth, and those who had participated in the program for one year or more.

Although the program does not focus on attitudes toward school or grades:

- Some youth reported that improvement of their grades could be attributed to working at Cookie Cart (34% of youth in year six, compared to 26% in year five).
- Youth spent about the same amount of time this year, as in the last, thinking about or preparing for college (54% of youth in 2011-2012, compared to 57% in 2010).
- Parents believe Cookie Cart produces an interest in post-secondary training and educational experiences (63% of parents in year six and 65% of parents in year five).

In general, the year 6 findings were consistent with those of previous years. For example, this year's youth (83%) report increased feelings of being ready to find and keep a job after working at Cookie Cart. This rating has increased or remained consistent since the first evaluation. Other areas that continue to strongly support participants' enhanced feelings of job readiness include:

- Working as a team
- Willingness to carry out responsibilities
- Feeling able to interview for a job
- Comfort talking to a potential employer
- Presenting themselves as an experienced employee
- Willingness to help others
- Serving customers
- Ability to set goals
- Knowing how to dress for interviews

However, there were a few items on this year's youth survey which produced significantly different results from previous years. Significant changes, both positive and negative, from 2010 to 2011-2012 are that this youth cohort:

- Report greater feelings of self-esteem (61% of youth in year six, compared to 47% of youth in year five).
- Say they feel better able to manage frustration and anger (61% of youth in year six, compared to 48% of youth in year five).
- Report a decreased ability to solve problems on their own (54% of youth in 2011-2012, compared to 67% of youth in 2010).
- Report a decline in their ability to make good decisions (66% of youth in 2011-2012, compared to 79% of youth in 2010).

Parents' year 6 survey results also varied from the previous year's results, but it is difficult to interpret the significance of these changes since relatively few parents took part in this year's survey.

Finally, the open-ended comments from the year 6 survey suggest that many Cookie Cart participants place a high value on the program's more specialized training and work readiness opportunities. These include:

- 360 Degrees, a work readiness and life skills training
- Customer Service training
- Financial Literacy
- Cookie Cart Captain and Bakery Assistant leadership positions
- The National Career Readiness Certificate, a job skill assessment

In future years, it may be helpful to add some specific questions about these specialized trainings and program components to the youth and parent surveys. It may be worth considering an alternative method such as focus groups, for collecting more information about youth and parents perceptions and experiences. Such additional questions, or alternative methods, might yield more specific and in-depth information about skill development and job performance than the brief comments outlined in this report.

Overall, the findings of this year's evaluation report 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.

# **Appendix**

Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes

Open-ended responses (youth and parent)

Follow-up interviews (youth and parent)

# Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes

# A1. Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program for 2011-2012(Total N= 57)\*\*

		ale =16		male =33		graders =27		h graders =24		onths =21	_	or more =29
Skills and attitudes	Valid number	Percent* positive										
Ability to work as a team member	16	73%	30	91%	23	74%	24	96%	20	80%	27	87%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	16	73%	31	94%	27	84%	21	88%	21	84%	27	87%
Skills in getting along with other kids	16	73%	26	77%	20	63%	23	92%	20	77%	23	74%
Willingness to help others	16	73%	27	79%	23	72%	21	84%	20	77%	24	77%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	15	71%	28	90%	23	79%	21	88%	17	74%	27	90%
Ability to interview for a job	15	71%	30	91%	24	75%	21	91%	16	64%	29	97%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	15	71%	28	82%	23	72%	21	88%	17	68%	27	87%
Ability to make good decisions	15	68%	21	66%	19	61%	17	71%	17	68%	19	63%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	15	68%	33	97%	26	81%	23	92%	21	81%	28	90%

24

# A1. Most frequently reported positive changes in skills and attitudes by gender, grade in school, and length of time in the program for 2011-2012 (Total N= 57)\*\* (continued)

		ale =16		male =33		h graders =27		h graders =24		onths =21		or more =29
Skills and attitudes	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive								
Ability to set goals	15	68%	24	71%	23	72%	17	68%	19	73%	21	68%
Skills in serving customers	13	65%	26	81%	22	76%	18	75%	11	50%	29	94%
Ability to see yourself as a role model for younger kids	11	50%	27	82%	20	63%	19	79%	15	58%	24	80%
Understanding the consequences of behavior	11	50%	24	75%	20	67%	16	64%	14	56%	22	73%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	12	55%	28	82%	22	69%	18	72%	13	50%	27	87%
Ability to keep scheduled commitments	13	59%	23	72%	18	58%	18	75%	11	44%	25	83%

25

<sup>\*</sup> 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.

<sup>\*\*</sup> 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.

# Youth open-ended responses

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

## My co-workers

The people at the Cookie Cart are very comfortable to be around, and I can somewhat be myself.
I liked the people at Cookie Cart.
At my time at the Cookie Cart, I enjoyed being around the people the most.
Working with other kids and getting to know them more.
I like working with others, making cookies, and making money.
I like coming to work and socializing with my peers – seeing what's new.
I like that I get to meet different teens like myself.
I like being around my peers and people like me.
One thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is the opportunity to work with others.
I like talking about things in the morning that go on in the world and helping each other.
I like to meet new people and when we all have different tasks to do for the day.
I like that my co-workers are all about the same age as me, and that we all get along.
I love how everyone is around my age, and how we all can work together.
One thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is working with others.
I like being able to work with people my age.
I love talking with everyone and love meeting new people.
I love that most of the teens here are around my age.
What I like most about the Cookie Cart is that I work with teens who are around my age.
I like that I get to meet a lot of other people my age.
I like that you get to work with others that you don't know, and then you can know them.
I am around other kids my age.
I like being around friends.
I like the employees the most because they're cool.
I get to know new people from different schools and from my school.

### The managers

I like the kindness of the employers and the opportunity to work for wages.

I love the energy Ms. Boyd brings to the kitchen.

They tell me when I'm doing something wrong and they help you.

Most of the staff are friendly, so there's always somebody to help.

I like that the staff is happy even if home is not going so good.

The way they show you how to be respectful.

It is easy to communicate with the adults here.

I like the bosses at the Cookie Cart.

### 360 and other classes/programs

I like the programs that they give us such as customer service, 360, and more. I've learned many things that will help me in the future.

One thing that I like most about the Cookie Cart is the work readiness programs. Through these programs, I have improved a lot of things as an employee.

What I like most about Cookie Cart is the 360 class because it teaches you what to do after this job, and how to get a good job.

I like what they have taught us about getting ready for a new job and customer service.

The thing I like the most about Cookie Cart is the 360 degree class. It is fun and really helpful about job experience – like how to apply for a job, fill out an application, and what to do for an interview.

The Cookie Cart allows youth to expand their experience further than just making cookies. It also teaches discipline and advanced writing, math, and reading skills. Also, it teaches skills on how to interview, keep a job, and life skills.

The classes that we take will take us farther than others in our community that's not doing anything. The classes make it so that we can tell others how to do and get things the right way.

These sales events are really beneficial, and 360.

Also, learn different skills for life.

I like customer service. I like going to sales events.

I like the programs that they have here at the Cookie Cart.

I like that I learned so much about customer service.

### **Cookie Cart experience**

The amount of growth and knowledge we collect over the time we are here.

I like working as a team. It helped me with my communication skills a lot, understanding how to get along with everyone.

I like that working at the Cookie Cart has helped me to open up. It helped to build my self-esteem and grow into myself.

I love to do customer service. Helping people is fun for me.

One out of a lot of things about Cookie Cart that I like the most is being able to do customer service. Meeting them, and even in the bakery, being able to work with the new employee that was maybe once a customer.

I like that I have more leadership, and as I grow as a person, and employee, I see it in myself and my supervisors see it too.

I love learning new things from Cookie Cart.

The one thing that I love the most is gaining ownership. This means taking responsibility for actions, and knowing how to handle a situation properly. Also, I like learning how to become a leader.

The one thing I like most about the Cookie Cart is everyone's ability to work together as a team and treat each other like family.

I like the self independence to fulfill my responsibility and I really enjoy it.

The one thing about the Cookie Cart I like the most is that everyone is helpful, and it will help teach me more about cookies.

One thing that I love the most about the Cookie Cart is that they make sure things are clear and understood.

### The environment

I really like the whole business of the Cookie Cart. It's unique that it caters to 14 year olds to 17 year olds.

I like that I've been given the ability to grow as a person and mature. I also like that the people around me notice. It's a comfortable place for me.

One of the most things I like about Cookie Cart would be that they are very flexible with their days.

What I like most is that everyone I work with is friendly.

I like how the adults and teens work together to have safe and friendly environment.

One thing I like about Cookie Cart is communication.

I like the friendly environment.

I find working here relaxing. It's pretty much something to look forward to.

#### The cookies

I like making cookies.

I like the cookies that Cookie Cart employees make. ©

The thing I like about the Cookie Cart is making the cookies and processing them. At the end of the day, I like having cookies to eat for myself.

There are a lot of things I like at the Cookie Cart. But, one thing is pressing cookie dough. I think it is fun and a good experience for me.

I like that we can get free cookies.

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

#### Improvement in skills

Customer service – more experience working with the customers.

I would improve my social skills because I have social anxiety.

One thing I can improve at Cookie Cart is being a cashier. I can change that because I still get nervous being the cashier and I got used to it after a while, but I'm done with work already.

I want to improve my certainty with things. I don't fully trust my ability to tell what is wrong and what isn't.

I tend to forget little details and have been told a couple of times to think it over and keep it in mind because they're important.

I would be on the register a lot more because I don't get around to it as much.

One thing that I can improve is decorating. Being able to do more and learn more; show what I can do.

Customer service - I just think I can do a little bit better.

#### Working faster

I would like to push myself more. Sometimes I find myself going at a normal pace when I can go a little faster and still get the done job well.

My speed because I feel like I'm always told that I move slowly.

I would like to get faster at doing my work because I want to do my part in helping.

#### Change in hours/scheduling

I would probably change the hours not just involving the money part, but it may increase teen responsibility or reliability. An improvement could be maybe switching up the routine a little, like after cleaning, play games.

I will give more work days so kids can get a little more money.

Being able to choose what days we work. Some days we have things to do – like life outside of work.

I don't think I would change anything about it, but get more hours in the Cookie Cart.

I would change how many work hours we get because I think we don't get enough.

### Relating to my co-workers

I would try harder and talk more to everyone.

I would be more social. Not everybody has inviting conversations.

How I was shy at first.

The way I communicate with other co-workers.

One thing I need to improve is talking to others. I'm really quiet and it seems like I'm not getting to know my co-workers.

If I could improve one thing about my work experience, it would be to interact with all the employees. It's because I don't get to work on different days, so I get to work with the same people for about a month.

#### **Attendance**

Being at the meetings every time without fail.

#### Overall attitude and behavior

I would change talking too loud and screaming, because I talk very loud and scream a lot.

The way I talk to people. Some people take it in a bad way.

Attitude - because it's always good to keep a good attitude.

I would try to talk more often.

I would improve more on being talkative.

One thing I would change is my talking experience. I would change it because I don't really communicate.

#### Work behavior/attitude

I would have been more motivated to do my job because if you're not, it can affect how you are doing your work.

My attitude. It wasn't bad but I wish I would have been more ready [to] work - excited.

If I could improve one thing, it would be taking more responsibility like asking if somebody needs help with something, or just doing something that needs to be done without being told to.

I wouldn't really change anything. I would try to keep steeping out of my box and go for being a leader more.

Staying on track and maintain focus. I say this because I want to always get into the habit of doing positive things and keeping my promises.

One thing that I would want to change about my work experience is gaining more chances to have a leadership role.

One day I made a mistake by walking out. I can honestly improve my dedication for being committed to my responsibility as an employee.

If I could, I would change having higher goals I can achieve.

One thing I would improve is staying focused. Sometimes I have days where I say, I could have done better.

### Improve work structure

I would want there to be more people working in the kitchen.

I would improve the way everyone is trained because everyone does things differently. Make everyone in accord.

I would change how we do things the same each day.

One thing I would change is the schedule to put people on dishes because the dishes stack up in the back. No one goes to do them until someone asks.

Positions, because it gives teens a chance to shine and see what they can do.

#### Other

More events because Cookie Cart makes more money.

Getting more hands on activities with college scholarships, and colleges and universities.

I would change the way I act because I feel like I am too quiet.

How you get paid because when you start, it's not the right wage.

Learning how to not get mad easily and take my time.

Being more involved in the activities. I feel as though if I was more involved in the beginning, my experience would have been better.

### No change

Nothing.

It feels unfinished because I had to quit for personal matters. But, I don't think I'll improve anything. I learned a lot here.

Nothing. Everything works out to its best.

None that I can think of.

I wouldn't change anything. I would keep everything the same.

I will not change anything. I love the way it is already.

I don't think I would want to change anything.

Nothing, because I'm learning new things almost every time I come in to work.

I can't think of anything. The Cookie Cart is great just the way it is.

Nothing. I like it the way it is.

I wouldn't change anything at all because it's already good the way it is. With new changes come more responsibilities.

# Parent open-ended responses

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

## Good job experience

Cookie Cart teaches the teenagers responsibility.

I like the skills that she learns and brings wherever she goes, and she does good with them.

Teen employment.

I like how they help the young teens improve their skills for better jobs.

They are teaching the kids how to open up. I like how Cookie Cart prepares the kids for jobs later in life. I like how it helps them become independent and how to work with others.

My daughter has the ability to purchase things for herself after saving. I'm proud of her. She also helps with the support of her ten siblings with pride.

I like the communication, the learning abilities, and that they are just around other teenagers, and supervisors.

#### The environment

How the kids greet you when you walk in.

I liked how the work environment was friendly and teamwork oriented.

It is more than one thing I love about Cookie Cart. It's hard to choose. Cleanness, cookies, friendliness, and giving young people a chance.

It is a positive work place just for teens.

## The staff

I like the way they work with teens when they are having problems – most jobs won't do that.

### Gives youth a chance

I like their willingness to work with kids and encourage them to follow their dreams, teach them respect, and to take pride in themselves and others.

The Cookie Cart is great for the community because it gives teens positive opportunities to prepare for their futures.

It gives young kids an opportunity.

I like that young teens can get jobs.

#### **The Cookies**

The cookies are good.

Cookies and milk.

The cookies.

#### Other

The Cookie Cart is the best thing to ever happen to the kids on the North Side. I really love the way they talk to the youth.

The classes she is taking.

Convenient location and work hours.

My son works there.

I don't know too much about Cookie Cart.

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

### Extension of employee and store hours

Open on weekends.

Give the kids more hours.

Longer hours.

I wish they could keep them in the program longer.

More work hours for them.

### **Expansion/location change**

More locations to help serve more teens.

A bigger building to get more young people off the streets for something positive to do, and to learn to earn an honest living.

Everything is okay, but they need more stores all over in Minneapolis.

Opening more locations for more kids.

Needs more sites.

Additional locations.

#### Other

For the manager to have a better understanding with the parents.

More varieties of cookies.

The one thing that I would improve if I had to would be the students/workers getting more cookies after work.

Go on more trips.

The way they work together here would help a lot.

No change
Nothing. It is a good business and I hope it will continue for many years.
Nothing. Everything is just fine.
I wouldn't change anything.
Nothing at all. Keep up the great work with the teens.
You are great.
Nothing.
I don't know too much about Cookie Cart.
I don't know.

Youth survey	, Empl	loyee ID#:	

## COOKIE CART YOUTH SURVEY

1. Please tell us about yourself.

a.	You are a:	Male	Female	(CIRCLE ONE)
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- 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	
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	

35

If you could improv	ve one thing about your work experience at Cookie Cart, what would	you change and why
Would you say wor	rking at Cookie Cart has	
	Hurt your grades at school,	
	Had no impact on your grades, or,	
	Improved your grades?	
	Refused	
	Don't know	
When you think of	your Supervisor at Cookie Cart, would you say she or he is	
٠	A poor teacher,	
	An okay teacher,	
	A good teacher or,	
	A great teacher,	
	Refused	
	Don't know	
Do you feel that yo	ou can ask your Supervisor for help if you need it? Would you say	
	Definitely yes,	
	Probably yes,	
	Probably not, or	
	Definitely not?	
	Refused	
	Don't know	

# Parent interview

Employee ID#:	
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## COOKIE CART PARENT INTERVIEW

Project Code: 71245
INTRODUCTION:
Hi, ( <u>PARENT NAME</u> ). 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, ( <u>YOUTH EMPLOYEE'S NAME</u> ) 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.

	Would you say			
Since working at Cookie Cart, has your son's or daughter's	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. V	What is the one thing about Cookie Cart that you like the most?
ŀ.	If you could improve <u>one thing</u> about Cookie Cart, what would you change and why?
5. S	ince your child started working at Cookie Cart, would you say your son's/daughter's grades in school have  Gotten worse,
	Stayed the same,
	Improved a little, or
	Improved a lot?
	Refused
	Don't know
Γhat	is the end of the survey. Thanks for your time. We really appreciate your help