



Cookie Cart

An Evaluation of a First-time Job Experience for Teens

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Introduction

Overview of the Cookie Cart program

Cookie Cart is a nonprofit employment program that offers young people age 15 through 18 an opportunity to build life, interpersonal, leadership, and transferable job skills through training and employment at a commercial bakery with a retail store. The program provides a first paid job experience for participants and helps them develop the skills necessary to transition to traditional employment.

Cookie Cart has served youth living in or near North Minneapolis since 1988. North Minneapolis is an area that has high rates of unemployment, 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.

*From here on out I am going to work hard for everything and anything that I want.
– Youth participant*

Cookie Cart's model

Cookie Cart participants earn a paycheck while receiving both hands-on employment experiences and classroom-based training focused on the soft skills needed to find and keep employment. Programming focuses on building real world skills and competencies within a positive learning environment where supervisors are teachers, and teaching takes priority over cookie production. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, and all lessons are given in the context of how to meet the expectations at traditional jobs.

The goal of programming is that participating youth gain or strengthen resources, skills, or knowledge in five key outcomes areas. The key outcome areas are:

- Employment readiness
- Interpersonal communication
- Goal orientation
- Critical thinking
- Connectedness to new communities

At the foundation of Cookie Cart's programming is a logic model based on youth development research by Search Institute, The Forum for Youth Investment, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, U.S. Department of Labor's Pathways to Careers, and Ignite Afterschool. Cookie Cart's logic model can be found in the Appendix.

Cookie Cart's programs

Based on the five outcome areas, Cookie Cart has developed five core programs. Each of these programs are offered after school and during the summer. All youth begin by working in the bakery and participate in programs as they are offered. The programs are broken into three components: experiential learning, classroom learning, and credentialed learning.

Experiential learning

- **Bakery Program** teaches youth to prepare, package, and sell cookies.
- **Customer Service Training** teaches youth interpersonal communications, professionalism, and sales.

Classroom learning

- **Career Readiness Program** teaches youth how to prepare resumes, practice job interviewing, explore career opportunities, and learn job search skills.
- **Financial Literacy workshops** cover the essential building blocks of personal finance: budgeting and saving, checking accounts, and personal credit.

Credentialed learning

- **National Career Readiness Certificates and ServSafe** are both nationally recognized credentials to verify to prospective employers that teens have the skills to be successful employees.

Cookie Cart's Board of Directors chartered a Youth Program Committee to monitor program quality, effectiveness, and completion. Comprised of board members, senior staff, and community members, the group works to identify community trends that influence the needs of youth, gaps in community services, and program resources. They recommend program strategy and direction, and work annually with Wilder Research to examine program quality and impact.

Study methods

Each year, Wilder Research works with Cookie Cart staff to improve evaluation activities. This will be the second year that Wilder Research is reporting on longer-term employment outcomes using Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) data. This data can be added to the perceptions of program impact collected through surveys of participants and parents.

Participant and parent surveys

Participant survey: Cookie Cart participants are eligible to complete a self-administered online survey after 75 hours of continuous work experience in the program. If participants completed a survey during the previous evaluation period, they were not asked to complete the survey. For the current evaluation, surveys were conducted between August 2015 and July 2016.

There were 149 youth employed at the time of the survey. Of the 149 youth employed, 70 were eligible, and 38 completed the survey on-site between August 2015 and July 2016 for a 54 percent response rate. Some youth leave the program without informing staff and do not go through a formal exit or graduation. Program staff are working on developing a formal exit process that includes completing the survey. This should improve the youth response rate.

Parent survey: Parents are asked to complete a telephone interview or self-administered online survey after their child has been employed at Cookie Cart for at least 75 hours. Between August 2015 and July 2016, approximately 45 parents were asked to participate in the study. Cookie Cart did not have the staffing capacity to ask the remaining 25 parents to participate. Of the 45 parents, eight either completed the survey online or did a telephone interview with a Cookie Cart volunteer. The response rate for the parent survey was 18 percent.

Cookie Cart staff encouraged parent participation by telephone, e-mail, and postal mail. Staff reported that parents may have a low participation rate because of their limited contact with the program and therefore may not recognize the value of their feedback. Youth are responsible for managing their work schedule and participation, and there is little direct parent involvement in programming. Cookie Cart staff continue to strategize about how to develop a meaningful and reasonable role in the program for parents.

Figure 1 shows the number of youth and parents who were eligible to participate in the survey and the number who completed surveys during the current evaluation.

1. Number of youth and parents completing surveys

Survey participants	Number participated	Number of youth eligible
Youth	38	70
Parents	8	70

Both the parent and youth surveys asked about participants' growth while at Cookie Cart, as well as their opinions about the value of the Cookie Cart employment experience.

A similar number of youth participated this year versus last year (38 versus 41). A smaller number of parents completed the survey this year versus last year (8 versus 15).

Because of the small number of parent responses, this report only includes summary items and open-ended comments provided by parents surveyed.

Analysis of participant surveys

In previous evaluations, Wilder Research determined youth gains by examining several specific questions about skill development or improvement within five core outcome areas of the program. Beginning in 2015, Cookie Cart staff were interested in learning about improvements in outcome areas rather than improvements in individual skills. Cookie Cart staff worked with Wilder Research to revise the design so that skills developed in each outcome area were grouped by the number of hours youth have worked in the program. Similar to 2015, target goals for each outcome area were analyzed by the number of skills improved and the number of hours worked. This year analysis was done for two groups: youth who worked 100 or fewer hours and youth who worked over 100 hours. Unlike the previous year (<200 hours, 200 to 500 hours, and >500 hours), the number of youth who worked over 200 hours was very small compared to youth who worked up to 200 hours. Additionally, there were no youth who worked over 400 hours. The distribution of hours that youth worked was balanced to avoid identifying the smaller number of participants.

DEED employment data

Cookie Cart's programming is built on giving youth a safe, nurturing place to develop critical employment, life, and leadership skills. Research demonstrates that long-term employment success is affected by a number of factors, many of which are beyond Cookie Cart's reach. With this limitation in mind, this year staff began working with Wilder

Research to investigate employment success of participants after they graduate from Cookie Cart’s programming. This included an evaluation of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) employment data of youth that have exited the program. This aspect of the evaluation is in the early stages of development and will be used by Cookie Cart staff to better understand the relationship between skill building and employability. It will be used to continue program refinements and determine strategic direction.

Cookie Cart requested data from DEED to identify wage, earnings, and hours worked for Cookie Cart participants. This report includes a summary of the preliminary employment outcomes of youth who had successfully “completed” Cookie Cart training, which—for the purpose of this study—was defined as regular participation lasting at least three months. Between January 12, 2011 and March 31, 2016, 245 participants had “completed” the program and provided releases for information.

This report summarizes the results of surveys completed by youth and their parents between August 2015 and July 2016 as well as the results of the analysis of DEED employment data. This is the tenth year of the Cookie Cart evaluation.

Results of surveys completed by youth

Characteristics of youth survey participants

Youth participants who completed a survey included those who had participated in the program continuously for a minimum of 75 hours and had not completed the survey during previous evaluations. Over two-thirds of the respondents were female and African American. Over half were in 9th or 10th grade.

According to program staff, there are no gender-based or culturally specific recruitment goals for the Bakery Program. Youth representation has more to do with chance variation in referrals rather than targeted recruitment.

The figure below illustrates the characteristics of youth survey participants.

2. Characteristics of youth survey participants

	Characteristic	N=38
Gender	Female	71%
	Male	29%
Grade level	9th-10th grade	55%
	11th-12th grade	45%
Racial/ethnic background	African American	87%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	8%
	Other	5%
	Native American	3%
	Latino	3%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% for race and ethnicity. Youth were allowed to identify more than one race or ethnicity.

Report of skill development by youth

Eligible youth were asked to rate changes in their skill development during their employment by answering a series of skill development questions related to five core outcome areas. They were specifically asked whether they thought these skills had increased, decreased, or remained the same. The purpose of this was to learn about youth strengths in skill areas that are most relevant to their overall Cookie Cart training and future employment experiences.

The five core outcome areas for the employment program in which youth rated their growth and improvement included:

- Employment readiness
- Interpersonal communication
- Goal orientation
- Critical thinking
- Connectedness to new communities

Employment readiness

For each employment readiness item, youth were asked whether or not their skills increased, decreased, or remained the same. Nearly all youth reported gains in the employment readiness skill areas. Slightly fewer youth (75%) rated improvements in knowing how to dress for an interview (Figure 3).

3. Percentage of youth reporting increased employment readiness skills while working at Cookie Cart

Employment readiness skills rated as “increased”	Youth N=31-35
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	97%
Ability to interview for a job	97%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	92%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	86%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	82%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	75%

Additionally, results were analyzed to determine if youth with more Cookie Cart experience (measured by hours worked) had differing outcomes. This analysis included two groups of youth: 1) those with 100 or fewer hours worked; and 2) those with over 100 hours worked at Cookie Cart.

Cookie Cart set targets for each outcome area.

Figure 4 shows that target goals for improved employment readiness skills were exceeded for each group of youth:

- 79% of youth who worked 100 or fewer hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)
- 95% of youth who worked over 100 hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)

In each of the skill areas, most youth participants felt that they had improved since they began at Cookie Cart. There were only slight differences between the groups that worked 100 or fewer hours and those that worked over 100 hours; one exception is that there was slightly fewer youth in the 100 hours or under group who reported improvements in their willingness to carry out responsibilities (86% versus 96% for the over 100 hours group).

4. Youth survey: Improvements in employment readiness skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart

Employment readiness skills rated as “increased”	≤100 hours worked N=12-13	>100 hours worked N=19-22
Ability to interview for a job	100%	96%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	93%	100%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	93%	100%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	86%	96%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	86%	86%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	86%	86%
Number of youth who rated all skills	N=11*	N=20*
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	65%	65%
Improved in 4 or more skill areas, youth report	79%	95%

* Youth needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Interpersonal communication

Most youth reported gains in interpersonal communication skills. Slightly fewer youth reported gains in using peaceful means to resolve conflicts (77%) and skills in getting along with other kids (78%) (Figure 5).

5. Percentage of youth reporting increased interpersonal communication skills while working at Cookie Cart

Interpersonal communication skills rated as “increased”	Youth N=34-37
Ability to work as a team member	94%
Ability to act as a role model	91%
Skill in serving customers	89%
Willingness to help others	87%
Skill in getting along with other kids	78%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	77%

Figure 6 shows that Cookie Cart’s target goals for improved interpersonal communication skills were exceeded for each group of youth:

- 71% of youth who worked 100 or fewer hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)
- 68% of youth who worked over 100 hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)

In each of the skill areas, most youth participants felt that they had improved since they began at Cookie Cart. There were a few differences in percentages (10 percentage points or more) of youth who reported improvements between the groups that worked 100 or fewer hours and those that worked over 100 hours: ability to act as a role model (100% versus 86%), willingness to help others (100% versus 78%), and ability to work as a team member (86% versus 100%).

6. Youth survey: Improvements in interpersonal communication skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart

Interpersonal communication skills rated as “increased”	≤100 hours worked N=11-14	>100 hours worked N=15-22
Ability to act as a role model	100%	86%
Willingness to help others	100%	78%
Ability to work as a team member	86%	100%
Skill in serving customers	85%	91%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	79%	75%
Skill in getting along with other kids	79%	78%
Number of youth who rated all skills	N=10*	N=15*
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	65%	65%
Improved in 2 or more skill areas, youth report	71%	68%

* Youth needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Goal orientation

For the goal orientation skills, almost all youth reported gains. Fewer youth reported gains in their commitment to succeeding in school (70%) and time spent thinking about or planning for college (47%) (Figure 7).

7. Percentage of youth reporting increased goal orientation skills while working at Cookie Cart

Goal orientation skills rated as “increased”	Youth N=34-37
Ability to do differently when things are not working	91%
Hope about your own future	89%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money	89%
Ability to set goals and work toward them	85%
Planning for the future	81%
Commitment to succeeding in school	70%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	47%

More youth reported improvements in most of the goal orientation skills in 2016 compared to youth who reported improvements in 2015. The percentage of youth who reported improvements in goal orientation skills differed by 10 percentage points or more between years, including: hopefulness about their future (74% in 2015 versus 89% in 2016) and knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save (61% in 2015 versus 89% in 2016). Figure 16 shows comparisons of youth who reported improvements in all outcome areas in 2015 and 2016.

Figure 8 shows that target goals for improved goal orientation skills were exceeded for each group of youth:

- 79% of youth who worked 100 or fewer hours (exceeding the 75% target goal)
- 77% of youth who worked over 100 hours (exceeding the 75% target goal)

For the majority of skills, most youth participants felt they had made gains. The percentage of youth who reported improvements differed between the groups that worked 100 or fewer hours and those that worked over 100 hours. The differences in percentages of youth who reported improvements between youth in both groups were greatest for these skills: commitment to succeeding in school (86% versus 61%), hopefulness about their own future (79% versus 96%), ability to set goals and work toward them (79% versus 90%), knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save money (75% versus 96%), and time spent thinking about or planning for college (71% versus 32%).

8. Youth survey: Improvements in goal orientation skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart

	≤100 hours worked N=9-12	>100 hours worked N=7-22
Goal orientation skills rated as “increased”		
Ability to do differently when things are not working	86%	95%
Commitment to succeeding in school	86%	61%
Ability to set goals and work toward them	79%	90%
Hope about your own future	79%	96%
Planning for the future	77%	83%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money	75%	96%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	71%	32%
Number of youth who rated all skills	N=11*	N=17*
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	75%	75%
Improved in 4 or more skill areas, youth report	79%	77%

* Youth needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Critical thinking skills

The majority of youth reported gains in their critical thinking skills. Slightly fewer youth reported gains in their ability to manage their own money (Figure 9).

9. Percentage of youth reporting increased critical thinking skills since working at Cookie Cart

	Youth N=35-37
Critical thinking skills rated as “increased”	
Learning from watching others	92%
Ability to make good decisions	91%
Ability to solve problems on own	84%
Ability to manage own money	81%

Figure 10 shows that youth in each group exceeded Cookie Cart’s target goals for improved critical thinking skills:

- 93% of youth who worked 100 or fewer hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)
- 87% of youth who worked over 100 hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)

Most youth reported gains in their critical thinking skills. The percentage of youth who reported improvements differed between those who worked 100 or fewer hours and those who worked over 100 hours. The differences in percentages (10 percentage points or more) of youth who reported improvements between both groups included: the ability to make good decisions (100% versus 86%), the ability to solve problems on their own (100% versus 74%), and learning from watching others (86% versus 96%).

10. Youth survey: Improvements in critical thinking skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart

	≤100 hours worked N=10-14	>100 hours worked N=17-22
Critical thinking skills rated as “increased”		
Ability to solve problems on own	100%	74%
Ability to make good decisions	100%	86%
Learning from watching others	86%	96%
Ability to manage own money	77%	83%
Number of youth who rated all skills	N=13*	N=20*
Target goal set by program	65%	65%
Improved in 1 or more skill areas, youth report	93%	87%

* Youth needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Connectedness to new communities

Nearly all youth reported gains in their connectedness to new communities. Fewer youth reported gains in knowing about people from other cultures (Figure 11).

11. Percentage of youth reporting increased connections to new communities since working at Cookie Cart

Connectedness to new communities skills rated as “increased”	Youth N=35-37
Involvement in leadership activities	89%
Skills getting along with other kids	87%
Comfort talking with people from different backgrounds	86%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	74%

Figure 12 shows that target goals for improved connectedness to new communities were exceeded for each group of youth:

- 71% of youth who worked 100 or fewer hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)
- 91% of youth who worked over 100 hours (exceeding the 65% target goal)

Most youth felt they made improvements in their connectedness to new communities. Differences in percentages (10 percentage points or more) between youth who worked 100 or fewer hours and those that worked over 100 hours groups included: comfort talking with people from different backgrounds (100% versus 77%), skills in getting along with other kids (79% versus 91%), and knowledge about people from other cultures (64% versus 81%).

12. Youth survey: Improvements in connectedness to new communities by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart

Connectedness to new communities skill areas rated as “increased”	≤100 hours worked N=9-14	>100 hours worked N=17-21
Comfort talking with people from of different backgrounds	100%	77%
Involvement in leadership activities	86%	91%
Skills getting along with other kids	79%	91%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	64%	81%
Number of youth who rated all skills	N=10*	N=21*
Target goal set by program	65%	65%
Improved in 2 or more areas	71%	91%

* Youth needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Results of surveys completed by youth and parents

Youth thoughts about their future education and employment

Cookie Cart participants were asked whether or not they had any change in thoughts about their future education or employment since working at Cookie Cart. Although 24 youth reported that there was no change, 14 youth said their thoughts have changed since working at Cookie Cart. Youth who reported a change were asked to describe the changes in their own words. Two of the 14 youth did not describe how they changed.

Youth comments were categorized into themes with the most common illustrated below.

13. In their own words: Changes in youth thoughts about their future education and employment since working at Cookie Cart (N=12)

	Number
Planning for college or thinking about a career	4
Goal oriented and thoughts about the future	4
Other	6

Note. This was an open-ended question. Youth were allowed to name more than one “change in their thoughts” during their experience at Cookie Cart.

The most common examples of what youth said follow:

Planning for college or thinking about a career

I thought about what I want to do in college. (2)

I want to work as a chef.

I started thinking about what I want my career to be.

Goal orientation/thoughts about the future

I am more goal oriented and know what I want out of life. (2)

From here on out I am going to work hard for everything and anything that I want.

It has made me think more about my future.

Other changes in thoughts mentioned by four remaining youth were help with responsibility, the importance of knowing more people, being open minded, and wanting to come back (not specified where).

Parents' perceptions of change in youth's thoughts about the future

Participating parents were asked, "Have your child's thoughts about their future education or employment changed since working at Cookie Cart?" Four of the eight parents responded that there had been a change. Those parents shared that their child has plans for college or a future education, employment, and being successful. Those same parents also shared their personal feelings towards their child's aspirations.

The following are parent's responses:

Yes, my child has been talking about going to college, living on campus, graduating, and having her own home. For employment, she wants to run her own business.

She talks about her future, going to college, and working a job.

My child has always been goal-oriented about her education and having money.

Other comments shared by parents reflected how they felt about their child's aspirations:

I am proud of her and she has been very responsible and hard working.

That is very good and I am very proud of her.

Cookie Cart has further influenced and reinforced all that I have been teaching my child.

Brighter future.

The remaining four parents said there was no change in their child's thoughts about their future education or employment.

Effect of Cookie Cart employment on grades and homework completion

Youth were asked, "Since working at Cookie Cart, have your grades in school improved, worsened or stayed the same?" Thirty-five youth participants answered this question. Although 54 percent of the youth said working at Cookie Cart had no effect on their grades, 43 percent reported an improvement (up seven percentage points from youth who reported improvement in 2015). Program staff require that youth employees maintain a C grade average in school to avoid having their work hours reduced. Participants are also required to show their grade reports at the end of each semester.

When parents were asked if working at Cookie Cart had affected their child's grades, three out of the seven parents who answered said there was improvement while four parents said there was no change in their child's grades.

Participating youth were asked whether they were more or less likely to complete their homework on time since working at Cookie Cart. Thirty-one youth provided a response.

Fifty-five percent of youth respondents said they were more likely to do so (up 35 percentage points from youth who reported a behavior change in 2015), while 39 percent of youth respondents said there was no change in their behavior, and 7 percent of youth respondents said they were less likely to complete their homework on time (Figure 14).

14. Youth survey: Improvement in grades and likeliness of homework completion

Effect of Cookie Cart employment on grades and homework since working at Cookie Cart	Youth 2015 N=36	Youth 2016 N=35
Improved grades	36%	43%
More likely to complete homework	20%	55%

What youth learned from Cookie Cart staff

Youth participants were asked in an open-ended question to identify at least three things they have learned from the adult staff. The most commonly mentioned lessons learned were: working with others, customer service, responsible behavior, leadership skills, communication skills, to ask for help, and problem solving.

Youth comments were categorized by themes and are summarized below.

15. In their own words: Things youth learned from Cookie Cart staff (N=38)

	Number	Percent
Responsible behavior	14	32%
Working with others	12	32%
Customer service	11	29%
Leadership skills	9	24%
Communication skills	9	24%
Respectful and positive behavior	6	16%
Asking for help	4	11%
Problem solving	4	11%

Note. Percentages may not total 100% because youth were allowed to name more than one "thing learned from staff" while working at Cookie Cart.

Other lessons mentioned by fewer than four youth were: being respectful, being on time, being positive, specific job skills, self-determination, staying focused, saving money, standing up for self, how to dress for work, how to work hard, controlling emotions, and pride in being different.

Other youth comments reflected their perspective of the of the adult staff behavior. They mentioned that everyone is welcoming, hardworking, committed, and had a desire for youth to better themselves. Additionally, youth mentioned that staff show them what jobs will be like outside of Cookie Cart through work experience. See the Appendix for the full list of all comments.

The most common themes mentioned by youth about lessons learned are illustrated below:

Responsible behavior

Be responsible. (7)

Be at work on time and ready to go. (2)

There is a level of professionalism that should be happening while at work, whether you are a youth employee or manager. When you clock in, leave your personal problems at the door.

It's always better to call in if you're going to be late even if you're just a minute late.

The last thing I learned is, you can be yourself and have fun but not too much fun.

Finish the food on your plate - don't leave a job undone.

Take initiative.

Working with others

The importance of teamwork. (5)

How to interact with co-workers.

How to get along with other people.

How to work with others.

You are not always going to like everyone.

I learned that you have to get along with others even though you might not like them.

I also learned at Cookie Cart that when others are struggling, go help them out.

Getting to know the team which is important to know each other's weaknesses and strengths.

Customer service

Customer service. (3)

Always smile. (2)

Smiling is always the key to success. It lets the customer know you're there and ready to go.

How to communicate in customer service. How to deal with issues I would have with a customer or co-worker.

Just a smile and a hello can really affect someone's day.

How to always smile, how my facial expressions come off, how to be better with others.

How to handle bad customers like if the customer is having a bad day that kind of thing.

The right way to talk to customers.

Leadership

Leadership (6)

How to be a leader in the bakery.

I learned about leadership skills.

To speak up and take leadership.

Communication

Communication skills. (4)

To talk to others and get to know others from different schools and make new friends.

How to start conversations.

Just having some good conversations can create new bonds of friendship!

It's not about what you do, it's how you say it. Your body language speaks for itself.

How to talk to some of the daily workers that work hard to get you where you want to be in life.

Asking for help

Take time to ask for what you need.

Speaking up when you don't know how to do something.

How to speak up.

How to ask for help.

Problem solving

Listen, watch, and learn which helped a lot of people including me. Just by observing closely and learning from your mistakes can really benefit yourself.

How to solve problems in an easy way. Learn new things. Take risks.

If something isn't working, try a new way.

Never give up even when you mess up and have to start over.

Parents' perceptions of what youth learned from Cookie Cart staff

All parents were asked their perceptions of what their children have learned from Cookie Cart adult staff. Three parents said their child learned lessons in interpersonal skills such as communication and customer service. The remaining parents said their children learned: how to get to work on time even when they were not scheduled to work, team work, problem solving, leadership skills, how to achieve their goals, how to stay motivated, and how to work on their attitude. See the Appendix for the list of all comments.

Asking for help from adult staff

When asked if they felt they could ask the adult staff at Cookie Cart for needed help, youth felt highly confident in seeking their help. All youth said they definitely or probably could seek the help of the adult staff. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of youth were definite in their response while 26 percent said it was probable that they would ask for help.

Similar to youth, all parents said they felt that their child definitely or probably could seek help from the adult staff. Seven parents were definite in their response while one said it was probable that they would ask for help.

Improvements in skills by grade level and gender

As in other years, differences in improvements in skills were examined by grade level and gender. In the 2016 evaluation period, results show that “younger youth” (9th and 10th graders), compared to “older youth” (11th and 12th graders), more frequently reported improvements in the following skills:

- Learning from watching others (100% younger youth vs. 81% older youth)
- Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money (100% younger youth vs. 75% older youth)
- Ability to manage their own money (86% vs. 75%)
- Hope about their own future (95% vs. 81%)

- Ability to set goals and work toward them (90% vs. 80%)
- Planning for their future (86% vs. 73%)
- Knowledge about people from other cultures (80% vs. 67%)
- Time spent thinking about or planning for college (52% vs. 40%)

Females more frequently reported improvements compared to males in the following skills:

- Ability to do something different when things are not working (96% vs. 80%)
- Willingness to carry out responsibilities (96% vs. 80%)
- Learning from watching others (100% vs. 73%)
- Hope about their own future (92% vs. 80%)
- Ability to act as a role model (96% vs. 78%)
- Ability to set goals and work toward them (88% vs. 78%)
- Planning for their future (85% vs. 70%)
- Knowledge of how to dress for an interview (96% vs. 64%)
- Knowledge about people from other cultures (80% vs. 60%)
- Time spent thinking about or planning for college (50% vs. 40%)

Males more frequently reported improvements than females in the following skills:

- Ability to make good decisions (100% vs. 88%)
- Ability to solve problems on own (91% vs. 81%)

See the Appendix for a complete table of the improvements reported by grade level and gender for 2016.

Comparison of youth ratings from 2015 to 2016

Youth ratings of 27 skills across all outcome areas were compared between participants from 2015 to 2016. Ratings are reasonably consistent for 19 of the skills while there are substantial differences between youth perceptions of improvements for the remaining eight skills. Youth differed mostly in their perceptions of knowing how to dress for an interview, their ability to interview for a job, comfort talking to a potential employer, serving customers, time spent thinking of or planning for college, knowing how to use a bank, budget and save money, being hopeful about their future, making good decisions, and

getting along with other kids (connectedness to communities). Differences range from 10 to 28 percentage points. Figure 16 shows comparisons of youth ratings in all skills across all outcome areas. Highlighted skills show the larger differences (greater than 9 percentage points) in the perceptions of improvements between youth from 2015 to 2016.

16. Comparison of youth ratings of increases in skill development from 2015 to 2016

	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Youth 2015 N=41	Youth 2016 N=38
Employee readiness skills		
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	97%	97%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	75%	86%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	95%	86%
Ability to interview for a job	93%	97%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	95%	92%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	82%	97%
Interpersonal communication skills		
Skills in serving customers	77%	89%
Ability to act as a role model	95%	91%
Willingness to help others	85%	87%
Skills in getting along with other kids	78%	78%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	83%	77%
Ability to work as a team member	85%	94%

16. Comparison of youth ratings of increases in skill development from 2015 to 2016 (continued)

	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Youth 2015 N=41	Youth 2016 N=38
Goal-orientation		
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	54%	47%
Ability to set goals and work toward them	77%	85%
Planning for the future	76%	81%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save money	61%	89%
Ability to do something different when things are not working	90%	91%
Commitment to succeeding in school	70%	70%
Hope about your own future	74%	89%
Critical thinking skills		
Learning from watching others	88%	92%
Ability to solve problems on own	78%	84%
Ability to make good decisions	81%	91%
Ability to manage own money	73%	81%
Connected to new communities		
Involvement in leadership activities	80%	89%
Comfort talking to people of different backgrounds	83%	86%
Skills getting along with other kids	73%	87%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	68%	74%

Cookie Cart employment analysis

This evaluation year, Cookie Cart staff worked with Wilder Research to examine employment success of youth participants after they graduate from Cookie Cart’s programming. This included an analysis of employment data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). This is the second year Cookie Cart has received these data.

Evaluation approach: DEED employment analysis

Cookie Cart requested data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to identify wage, earnings, and hours worked outcomes for Cookie Cart “graduates,” which, for the purpose of this summary, are those who participated in Cookie Cart programming for at least three months and exited between January 12, 2011 and March 31, 2016. There is some overlap between this group and the group included in last year’s evaluation report, which exited prior to September 30, 2014.

Comparisons across years should be made with caution, as each year contains a different set of students whose varying characteristics, employment decisions, and other factors may have impacted averages in each year. Graduates are grouped based on their exit date to reflect the greatest amount of data available. For example, students who graduated prior to July 2015 are included in the Quarter 1, Year 1, and Year 2 analysis, but not the Year 3 analysis, as they exited the program fewer than three years prior to the data pull. As such, “increases” or “decreases” in employment over time should be interpreted with caution.

Of students who graduated from the program before April 2016, slightly more than half were female (60%), and nearly four out of five were age 16 or younger when they were hired by Cookie Cart (78%). Most participants identified as African American (72%).

17. Employment analysis: Demographics of youth participants

	Quarter 1 3/31/16	Year 1 6/30/15	Year 2 6/30/14	Year 3 6/30/13
Exited before				
Female	62%	58%	56%	57%
Male	38%	42%	44%	43%
16 and younger at hire	78%	78%	78%	77%
17 and older at hire	22%	22%	22%	23%

Notes. Reflects valid percent. Race data are missing for 10 graduates in the 6/30/15 cohort.

17. Employment analysis: Demographics of youth participants (continued)

	Quarter 1	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Exited before	3/31/16	6/30/15	6/30/14	6/30/13
African	2%	2%	0%	0%
Asian	17%	17%	16%	14%
African American	72%	70%	74%	75%
Multiracial	6%	7%	7%	8%
White	3%	4%	4%	3%
All youth	245	194	129	95

Notes. Reflects valid percent. Race data are missing for 10 graduates in the 6/30/15 cohort.

Employment

Employment rates increased steadily following program exit. During the year prior to program entry, only 16 percent of participants were employed. Approximately 78 percent of students surveyed were age 16 or younger when they began the program, so high rates of employment are not necessarily expected, since students can have other commitments (high school, college, etc.) during this time.

At the end of their first quarter after their Cookie Cart program completion, 47 percent of graduates were employed; of those employed, 30 percent were employed by Cookie Cart. Overall employment increased to 69 percent by the end of the first year, remained steady at 68 percent by the end of the second year, and increased to 72 percent at the end of the third year after program exit. For comparison, this is much higher than the percentage of working-age adults employed in the Near North community of Minneapolis (55%) during 2008-2012.

Though we would expect higher employment rates among students who were older at the time of exit, employment rates among those who were hired at age 17 or older were equal to younger graduates after the first quarter and first year, but lower after the second and third years (54-55% among graduates 17 and older at hire vs. 72-77% among graduates 16 and younger at hire).

Continuous employment

A participant is said to be “continuously employed” if they earned at least one dollar during each quarter of the year. Given that Cookie Cart graduates may be continuing in high school or college after completing the program, continuous employment may not be a goal for all graduates.

Two years after exit, 32 percent of Cookie Cart participants were continuously employed, increasing to 39 percent three years after exit. At both Year 2 and 3, participants age 16 or younger at hire had higher rates of continuous employment than those hired at age 17 or older (Year 2: 36% vs. 18%; Year 3: 42% vs. 27%).

Employment industry

During the first quarter and first year following program exit, many participants worked in retail or wholesale trades, accommodation, or food service. Employment sector data were unavailable for Year 2 and Year 3. Of those employed at the end of the first quarter, 48 percent of employed participants worked in food service, and 23 percent were employed in retail, including those employed by Cookie Cart. By the end of the first year, a similar percentage of employees worked in food service (51%) and more worked in retail (31%). Some students held jobs in both sectors.

Median earnings and hours

As a whole, median earnings, median wages, and median hours worked by Cookie Cart participants increased annually. However, graduates who were 17 or older at hire received lower wages and fewer hours in Year 3.

Minnesota labor laws impact the wages and hours worked by children under the age of 18, and particularly those under age 16. To account for some of these effects, individuals who were 17 or older at hire are highlighted in this section, which should yield more comparable year-over-year hours and wages. It should be noted that most program graduates in this analysis were age 16 or younger when they were hired.

In Year 1, 67 percent of Cookie Cart graduates age 17 or older at hire were employed, including Cookie Cart employment. After that, employment rates decreased to 54 percent (Year 2) and 55 percent (Year 3). In contrast, employment rates among younger graduates were substantially higher in Year 2 and Year 3 (72% and 77%, respectively).

Median wage and earnings

Prior to entry, the median wage of graduates age 17 and older was \$7.25 per hour. After one year, graduates earned a median wage of \$8.75 per hour; after two years, a median of \$8.70 per hour, and after three years, a median of \$8.31 per hour. Of note, the pattern for graduates age 16 and younger demonstrated a steady increase from \$7.25 per hour prior to entry to \$9.22 per hour in Year 3.

Median hours

Prior to program entry, the median hours worked by graduates age 17 or older was 195 hours. For the 17 or older group, the median number of hours worked increased from Year 1 to Year 2, from 279 to 345 hours, but decreased in Year 3 to 280 hours. Again, the pattern for graduates age 16 and younger was different, demonstrating a steady increase in hours from a median of 198 hours prior to program participation, to 414 in Year 1, to 436 in Year 2, and finally 552.5 hours in Year 3.

Areas for further study

Unlike in last year's evaluation, this year's DEED data showed substantial differences between participants who were age 16 or younger at hire compared to those who were 17 or older at hire, with the latter group demonstrating less positive outcomes on nearly all measures. This could be due to a variety of factors. Older students could come to Cookie Cart with different risk factors and barriers. Alternately, lower employment rates could be the result of college attendance. For example, those age 17 at hire and exit would be 19 and 20 years old during Year 2 and Year 3, prime college years; meanwhile, those age 15 at hire would be 17 and 18 years old, and likely still in high school. On the other hand, the threshold for employment is relatively low – participants need only earn one dollar at any point during the year to be considered employed. It could be worthwhile to further explore the differences between participants hired at different ages.

Conclusions and issues to consider

Consistent with previous evaluation years, the 2016 parent and youth survey results, coupled with the long-term employment of program graduates, suggest confidence that Cookie Cart's hands-on programming, caring staff, and work environment provides skill development, socialization, and leadership opportunities that inspire youth participants to think about their future and prepare them to find future jobs.

You can achieve any goal you have set. Don't doubt yourself and always do your best.
– Youth participant

My child has been talking about going to college, living on campus, graduating, and having her own home – Parent

Consistent with the previous evaluation year, youth findings reveal that Cookie Cart provides skill development, socialization, and leadership opportunities that inspire youth participants to think about and plan for their future, and prepare them to find future jobs.

Youth exceeded their goals in all of the target areas:

Youth exceeded the target goals for each core outcome area, specifically in the areas of employment readiness, critical thinking skills, and connectedness to new communities (for youth who worked more than 100 hours).

Cookie Cart staff has introduced program components to encourage participants to focus on their school performance, which may have contributed to the following:

- Similar to the previous year, 70 percent of youth report they are committed to succeeding in school. Eighty-nine percent of youth (compared to 74 percent in 2015) report that they are hopeful about their future, and 81 percent of youth (compared to 76 percent in 2015) are planning for the future.
- This year, 55 percent of youth report that they are more likely to complete their homework compared to 20 percent of youth in the previous year.
- In a slight increase from last year, participating youth (43% in 2016 vs. 36% in 2015) reported improvement in their grades since working at Cookie Cart.
- Nearly all youth (97%) are able to present themselves as experienced employees, able to interview for a job, and are comfortable talking to a potential employer. Eighty-six percent of youth survey respondents feel like they know how to dress for an interview and feel ready to find and keep a job after working at Cookie Cart.

Long term outcomes: employment

Participants who completed the Cookie Cart program demonstrated high rates of employment given their young age at the time of study. In the two years following program exit, employment for graduates hovered around 68 to 69 percent. During this time, Cookie Cart remained a major employer for participants, and much of their work was centered in the retail and food service industries.

Three years after program exit, 72 percent of Cookie Cart graduates were employed at some point during the year, which is substantially higher than the employment rate for adults in North Minneapolis.¹ However, the employment rate for participants age 17 or older at hire was lower than for younger participants, which differs from the results of last year's evaluation. Cookie Cart could consider exploring this further to determine what barriers may prevent older participants from securing and maintaining employment.

The following are some considerations for future Cookie Cart evaluation work:

- Increase the sample size in order to break down the number of eligible hours youth work into a smaller group of 100 to 199 hours, 200 to 350 hours, and 351 to 500 hours.
- Consider a role for parents so they may realize the value of their input at the time of the survey, work with the evaluator to explore ways to increase parent participation at time of survey, or discontinue surveying parents.
- Consider adding open-ended questions to the youth survey that will elicit more insight on the youth experience with the program.
- Consider creating a brief exit interview for youth participants to complete before they leave the program to learn about experiences of youth who have been employed for a longer term (e.g. one year).

The very strong and positive survey results coupled with the long-term employment of program graduates suggest that Cookie Cart has remained successful in helping North Minneapolis youth develop solid life, interpersonal, leadership, and transferable job skills. Youth participants are developing positive and respectful relationships with peers, learning meaningful job skills in a demanding work environment, realizing the importance of teamwork and responsibility, and are highly appreciative of the caring and support from staff.

¹ Employment data based on American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2012 averages compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Appendix

Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade

A1. Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade in school (Total N=38)

Skills	Male N=11		Female N=26		9th-10th graders N=21		11th-12th graders N=15	
	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**
Ability to work as a team member	11	100%	23	92%	19	95%	15	94%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	10	91%	24	100%	19	91%	15	94%
Ability to make good decisions	10	100%	22	88%	18	95%	14	88%
Ability to interview for a job	10	100%	25	96%	21	100%	14	93%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	10	91%	25	100%	20	100%	15	94%
Ability to solve problems on own	10	91%	21	81%	17	81%	14	88%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money	10	91%	21	88%	19	100%	12	75%
Ability to manage own money	9	82%	21	81%	18	86%	12	75%
Willingness to help others	9	82%	23	89%	18	86%	14	88%
Comfort talking with people of different backgrounds	9	82%	22	88%	17	85%	14	88%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	9	82%	22	88%	17	85%	14	88%
Skills in serving customers	9	90%	22	88%	18	90%	13	87%
Ability to do something different when things are not working	8	80%	24	96%	17	90%	15	94%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	8	80%	26	96%	20	95%	14	88%

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

** Percent positive reflects the percentage of only those youth that reported increases based on the number of valid responses to each item. The response scale was increased, decreased, or no change.

A1. Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade in school (Total N=38) (continued)

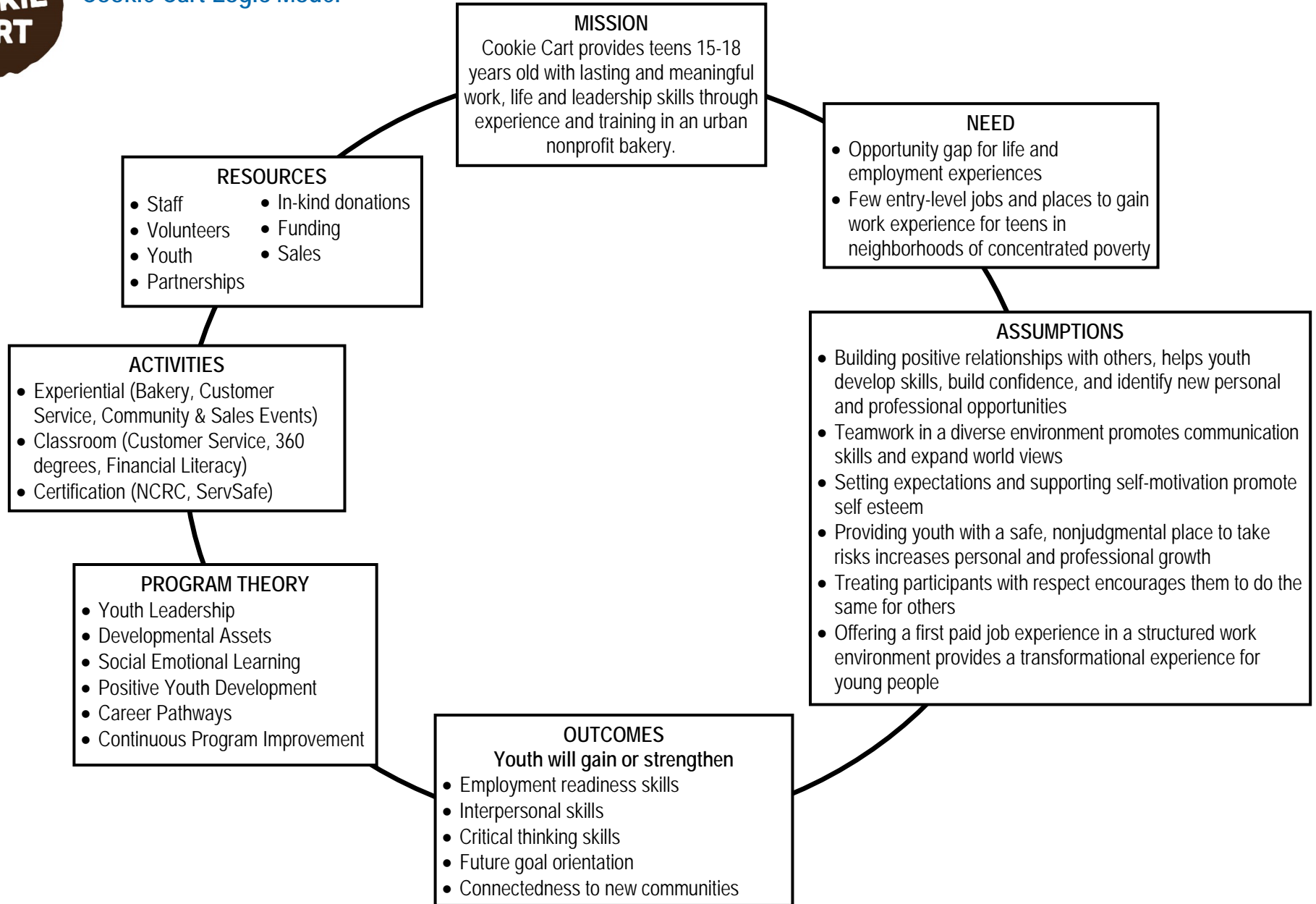
Skills	Male N=11		Female N=26		9th-10th graders N=21		11th-12th graders N=15	
	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**	Valid number*	Percent positive**
Learning from watching others	8	73%	26	100%	21	100%	13	81%
Skills in getting along with other kids	8	73%	21	81%	18	90%	14	82%
Involvement in leadership activities	8	80%	24	89%	19	91%	13	87%
Hope about your own future	8	80%	24	92%	19	95%	13	81%
Skills in getting along with other kids	8	80%	24	89%	16	76%	13	81%
Ability to act as a role model	7	78%	24	96%	17	90%	14	93%
Ability to set goals and work toward them	7	78%	22	88%	17	90%	12	80%
Planning for the future	7	70%	22	85%	18	86%	11	73%
Commitment to succeeding in school	7	64%	19	73%	15	71%	11	69%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	7	64%	24	96%	18	90%	13	81%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	7	70%	19	79%	15	79%	11	73%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	6	60%	20	80%	16	80%	10	67%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	4	40%	13	50%	11	52%	6	40%

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

** Percent positive reflects the percentage of only those youth that reported increases based on the number of valid responses to each item. The response scale was increased, decreased, or no change.



Cookie Cart Logic Model



Youth open-ended responses categorized by question

Have your thoughts about your future education or employment changed since working at Cookie Cart? How have they changed?

Planning for college or thinking about career

I thought about what I want to do in college. (2)

I want to work as a chef.

I started thinking about what I want my career to be.

Goal orientation

I am more goal oriented and know what I want out of life. (2)

It has made me think more about my future.

From here on I am going to work hard for everything and anything that I want.

Other

It helps me with my responsibility.

Want to come back.

Knowing more people is extra important.

Open minded.

What youth learned from adult Cookie Cart staff

Working with others

The importance of teamwork. (5)

Getting to know the team which is important to know each other's weaknesses and strengths.

I learned that you have to get along with others even though you might not like that person.

You're not always going to like everyone and everything.

How to get along with other people.

How to interact with co-workers.

I learned at Cookie Cart when others are struggling, go help them out.

Working with others.

What youth learned from adult Cookie Cart staff (continued)

Responsible behavior

Be responsible. (7)

Be at work on time and ready to go. (2)

There is a level of professionalism that should be happening while at work, whether you are a youth employee or manager. When you clock in, leave your personal problems at the door.

It's always better to call in if you're going to be late even if you're just a minute late.

The last thing I learned is, you can be yourself and have fun but not too much fun.

Finish the food on your plate - don't leave a job undone.

Take initiative.

Customer service

Customer service. (3)

Always smile. (2)

Smiling is always the key to success. It lets the customer know you're there and ready to go.

How to communicate in customer service. How to deal with issues I would have with a customer or co-worker.

Just a smile and a hello can really affect someone's day.

How to always smile, how my facial expressions come off, how to be better with others.

How to handle bad customers like if the customer is having a bad day that kind of thing.

The right way to talk to customers.

Leadership skills

Leadership. (6)

How to be a leader in the bakery.

I learned about leadership skills.

To speak up and take leadership.

Communication skills

Communication skills. (4)

To talk to others and get to know others from different schools and make new friends.

How to start conversations.

Just having some good conversations can create new bonds of friendship!

It's not about what you do, it's how you say it. Your body language speaks for itself.

How to talk to some of the daily workers that work hard to get you where you want to be in life.

What youth learned from adult Cookie Cart staff (continued)

Positive and respectful behavior

Staying positive. (3)

Be respectful to people. (2)

Great attitude.

Asking for help

Take time to ask for what you need.

Speaking up when you don't know how to do something.

How to speak up.

How to ask for help.

Problem solving

Listen, watch, and learn which helped a lot of people including me. Just by observing closely and learning from your mistakes can really benefit yourself.

How to solve problems in an easy way. Learn new things. Take risks.

If something isn't working, try a new way.

Never give up even when you mess up and have to start over.

Other

Be and stay focused. (2)

Thanks to staff I learned how to stand up for my rights and beliefs, and how to be myself always no matter what. I learned that being different is amazing; it's wonderful and something that you should be proud of.

They are committed to their job. They like to help you to better yourself. They show you how other jobs will be by giving the work experience.

They're friendly, hardworking, and welcoming.

Focus on saving money.

Multi-tasking.

Participation.

Commitment.

Take risks.

Parent open-ended responses by question

Have your child's thoughts about their future education or employment changed since working at Cookie Cart? If yes, how have they changed?

Planning for college and future job

Yes, my child has been talking about going to college, living on campus, graduating, and having her own home. For employment, she wants to run her own business.

She talks about her future, going to college, and working a job.

My child has always been goal-oriented about her education and having money.

Pride for child's aspirations

I am proud of her and she has been very responsible and hard working.

That is very good and I am very proud of her.

Cookie Cart has further influenced and reinforced all that I have been teaching my child.

Brighter future.

What has your child learned from Cookie Cart staff?

Interpersonal skills

She has learned a lot about communication skills.

Customer service and working in teams.

Customer service.

How to work with the public.

How to treat customers.

Other

Making it to work on time and going to work when she was not scheduled.

That many things I have taught her is right - reinforced values.

Leadership.

Solving problems.

Staying motivated.

Working on attitude.

Achieving goals.
