



Cookie Cart

An Evaluation of a Youth Work Experience and Empowerment Program in 2014

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Introduction

Overview of the Cookie Cart program

Cookie Cart is a nonprofit employment program that offers young people ages 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.

If I didn't work at to Cookie Cart, I don't think I would be the best or at least a good employee for my first job somewhere else.

Cookie Cart participants receive both hands-on employment experiences and classroom-based training focused on the “soft skills” needed to find and keep employment. The program has three components: experiential learning, classroom learning, and credentialed learning.

Experiential learning

Bakery Program

The Bakery Program teaches basic employment skills including appropriate workplace behavior, problem solving, teamwork, time management, following instructions, and completing tasks. Employees learn these skills by preparing cookie dough, baking, and packaging cookies for retail sale, checking orders for accuracy, and maintaining a clean work environment. All youth participants are part of this program.

Cookie Cart Captains

Working as a Cookie Cart Captain is an advanced opportunity for youth employees who have demonstrated leadership strength.

Cookie Cart offers eligible youth who have been employed 90 days or longer, the chance to further develop and strengthen employment and leadership skills through a promotion to Cart Captain. Cart Captains are initially trained by program staff to oversee the quality

of the bakery products produced by their peers, as well as to check cookie orders and packaging slips for accuracy.

The role of the Cart Captain involves leading youth employee teams, training new employees, and managing work assignments. They also have a responsibility to help peers follow baking and environmental guidelines, by keeping the baking area clean and free from contaminants. Additionally, Cart Captains work with new employees to ensure that customer service standards are met.

Classroom learning

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. In 2013, sixty youth earned a certificate of completion for 360 work readiness training.

Customer service training

Cookie Cart employees who 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 promotional or sales events.

Financial literacy

Cookie Cart collaborates with area financial institutions such as Wells Fargo, U.S. Bank, Thrivent Financial, and BMO Harris Bank to teach participants basic personal financial skills. Participants learn about checking and savings accounts, balancing accounts, budgeting, and using credit. Pre- and post-tests are administered to assess participants' knowledge at the beginning, as well as at the end of the course. Participants attend three two-hour long sessions. Seventy-four youth completed 660 hours of financial literacy training in partnerships with US Bank, Wells Fargo, and Junior Achievement in 2013.

Credentialed learning

National Career Readiness Certification

In partnership with the Minnesota Workforce Center, Cookie Cart supports participants as they participate in a training and test preparation process that prepares them for the National Career Readiness Certification test. The test, developed by the ACT Corporation, helps businesses measure potential employees' job skills including applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information - all of which are essential to employment success. Thirty-three youth earned a National Career Readiness Certification in 2013.

In 2013 Cookie Cart served 135 youth employees living in or near North Minneapolis. Slightly over half (53%) of those youth participants were female, and most (67%) identified themselves as African American or Asian American (19%). One person identified themselves as African. (Figure 1).

1. Characteristics of Cookie Cart youth employees served in 2013 (N=135)

	Characteristic	Number	2013 Percent
Gender	Male	64	47%
	Female	71	53%
Racial/ethnic background	African American	90	67%
	Asian American	25	19%
	Caucasian	12	9%
	Multicultural	5	4%
	Latino	3	2%
	African	1	<1%

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

Study methods

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 an evaluation of the program. Both participants and parents are involved in the evaluation.

Participant survey: Cookie Cart participants are required to complete a self-administered online survey after 90 days of continuous work experience in the program. If participants had completed a survey during the previous evaluation period, they were not asked to complete the survey. For the current evaluation, surveys were conducted between April and May 2014.

There were 86 youth employed at the time of the survey. Of the 86 youth employed, 26 were eligible, and all completed the survey on-site during April and May for a 100 percent 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 90 days. In 2014, twenty-six parents were asked to participate in the study during April and May. Thirteen of the 26 parents either completed the survey online or did a telephone interview with a Cookie Cart volunteer. The response rate for the parent survey was 50 percent.

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.

Data from all surveys were sent to Wilder Research for review and analysis.

Youth participation in the 2014 evaluation was similar to the previous year, while parent participation declined substantially. Program staff reported that parent's general lack of familiarity with the program and limited contact with staff may have contributed to participation rates. The bakery was renovated this past year and staff felt the temporary program site was not conducive to connecting with parents. When the renovations are complete, program staff will have a view of the front lobby, and will also be visible to everyone who walks in, making it easier to interact with parents. Cookie Cart program staff are committed to developing strategies to encourage parent involvement.

Figure 2 shows the number of youth and parents who completed surveys in the past two years.

2. Number of participating youth and parents completing surveys in the past two years

	Year 8 (2014)	Year 7 (2013)
Youth	26	34
Parents	13	24

This report summarizes the results of surveys completed by youth and their parents in 2014, and compares them with the results of the 2013 study. This is the eighth year of the Cookie Cart evaluation.

Results of surveys completed by youth in 2014

Characteristics of youth survey participants

The 2014 survey included youth who had participated in the program continuously for at least three months, and had not completed the survey in 2013. Almost two-thirds (65%) of the respondents were female, a shift from the previous study period, when about half (47%) were female. The majority (62%) of youth were in the 9th or 10th grade, consistent with the previous study period. Seventy-three percent of the youth surveyed were African American, the largest participant group in each evaluation year. Nineteen percent surveyed were Asian or Pacific Islander, 15 percent were Caucasian, and 8 percent were American Indian. One participant reported that they identified with more than one race or ethnicity.

According to program staff, there are no racially or culturally specific recruitment goals for the Bakery Program. Year to year fluctuation in youth representation has more to do with chance variation in referrals rather than targeted recruitment.

The following figure shows the characteristics of the survey participants in 2014 and 2013.

3. Characteristics of youth survey participants in the past two years

	Characteristic	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Gender	Male	35%	53%
	Female	65%	47%
Grade level	9 th -10 th grade	62%	59%
	11 th -12 th grade	38%	41%
Racial/ethnic background	African American	73%	79%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	19%	8%
	Caucasian	15%	15%
	American Indian	8%	12%
	Latino	-	3%

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

Skill development of youth

As in the previous evaluation year (2013), youth participants were asked to rate changes in their skill development in five core outcome areas during the period of their employment. They were specifically asked whether they thought these skills had increased, stayed the same, or decreased. The purpose for this is to learn about youth strengths in the skills most relevant to their overall Cookie Cart training and future employment environments. The five core areas in which youth rated their growth and improvement included: employment readiness, interpersonal communication, goal orientation, critical thinking, and connectedness to new communities, over the last two evaluation periods.

Employment readiness

In the current year, with the exception of two items, youth self-ratings of employment readiness skills remained about the same as in 2013. This year, fewer youth reported that they knew how to dress for an interview (68% in year 8 vs. 88% in year 7), or that they had the ability to interview for a job (83% in year 8 vs. 93% in year 7). (Figure 4).

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

Employment readiness skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	96%	91%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	92%	91%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	88%	94%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	84%	85%
Ability to interview for a job	83%	93%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	68%	88%

Interpersonal communication

The interpersonal communication core area has been reorganized to include more specific skill areas that are important for youth's work in the storefront and at sales events. Some skills were added that were not included in the previous year's interpersonal skills area or in the previous evaluation survey. The added skills are: ability to work as a team member; willingness to help others; and skill in serving customers. These areas do not have comparison ratings.

This year, more youth reported that they knew how to use peaceful means to resolve conflicts compared to youth in the previous year (88% in year 8 vs. 62% in year 7). Notably this year, all youth reported that they felt confident that they were able to work as a team. (Figure 5).

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

Interpersonal communication skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Ability to work as a team member	100%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to act as a role model	91%	88%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	88%	62%
Willingness to help others	88%	Not asked in year 7
Skill in serving customers	88%	Not asked in year 7
Skill in getting along with other kids	81%	85%

Goal orientation

This goal orientation area also has been reorganized, to include a few new skill areas not included in previous evaluations, yet pertinent to the Financial Literacy and 360 Degree trainings youth receive. These new skill areas are: hope about your own future; planning for the future; knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money; and the ability to do differently when things are not working. There are no comparison ratings.

Figure 6 shows youth self-ratings of improvements, in goal orientation for Year 8 and Year 7. Current year ratings for ability to set goals and work toward them and commitment to succeeding in school were similar to 2013. Fewer youth reported spending time thinking about or planning for college this year (68% in year 8 vs. 78% in year 7). It should be noted that these ratings are the highest reported in all evaluation years for time spent thinking about or planning for college. In Year 7, the percentage of youth reporting positive changes increased by 24 percentage points from Year 6 (time spent thinking about or planning for college: 78% in year 7 vs. 54% in year 6). There is no information in the data to explain why ratings have fluctuated in this area.

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

Goal orientation skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Hope about your own future	88%	Not asked in year 7
Planning for the future	88%	Not asked in year 7
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money	82%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to set goals and work toward them	81%	78%
Ability to do differently when things are not working	80%	Not asked in year 7
Commitment to succeeding in school	79%	77%*
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	68%	78%

Note: This skill area was called commitment to academic success in Year 7.

Critical thinking skills

The critical thinking skills core area has been reorganized, and a new skill area, learning from watching others, has been added. The other skill areas are: ability to solve problems on own; and ability to make good decisions.

Current year youth self-assessments show high ratings for improvements in overall critical thinking skills. Of the skill areas youth were asked to rate, only one, ability to manage their own money, was also rated in the previous year. Results show no change in ratings for managing their own money from Year 7 to Year 8. (Figure 7).

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

Critical thinking skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Ability to solve problems on own	86%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to make good decisions	85%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to manage own money	77%	76%
Learning from watching others	72%	Not asked in year 7

Connections to new communities

The connections to communities core area has been expanded by adding some new skill areas. Staff want to learn not only how youth employees work with their peers from their own cultural group, but also how they work with those from diverse backgrounds. The new skill areas are, knowledge about people from other cultures, and comfort talking with people of different backgrounds. These skill areas were not included in previous evaluations; therefore there are no comparison ratings.

The percentage of youth reporting positive changes for involvement in leadership activities increased by over 20 percentage points from the previous year (involvement in leadership activities: 22 percentage points). Youth self-ratings of their skills in getting along with other kids stayed about the same during the last two years. (Figure 8).

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

Connections to new communities skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=26	Year 7 (2013) N=34
Skills getting along with other kids	92%	85%
Involvement in leadership activities	92%	70%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	86%	Not asked in year 7
Comfort talking with people from of different backgrounds	79%	Not asked in year 7

Thoughts about future education and employment

As in previous years, some questions were asked to allow participants to provide in-depth responses about their Cookie Cart experience.

In 2014, a new question was asked of youth to learn how working at Cookie Cart influenced their thoughts for their future education or employment. Twenty-five participants answered this question. Slightly more than half (52%) of the youth participants said their thoughts have changed since working at Cookie Cart. Youth who reported a change were also asked to describe how their thoughts had changed. Participants offered one or more changes as a result of the Cookie Cart program.

Their categorized comments and the frequency with which they were mentioned are shown in the figure below:

9. Changes in youth thoughts about their future education and employment since working at Cookie Cart (N=25)

	Number
Realized job possibilities or options	7
Planned for college or thinking about a career	4
Learning how to work with others	4
Improved or increased job skills	2
Taking the financial class	2

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.

Other changes mentioned by one respondent were: having gained more experience to be more competitive for jobs, having a professional appearance, working on more than just job skills, but also personal values, and learning that Cookie Cart is a good place to develop skills like confidence.

The following are illustrative quotes provided by youth participants:

Realizing job possibilities or options

I have always wanted a job, after working with Cookie Cart, I want more than just a job. I want a good, high paying job, something more than just Burger King or Wendy's.

Cookie Cart gave me bigger ideas of what to expect and what to do in a job.

Working at Cookie Cart has made me want to do big things in life, like own my own business and be my own boss.

After going to Dairy Queen, I found more job offers. It's good to know that I could always switch jobs.

Cookie Cart gave me bigger ideas of what to expect and what to do in a job.

I used to try to look for lower standard jobs before Cookie Cart because I felt that I didn't know much about job experiences and background knowledge. I thought that I wouldn't meet the standards for some jobs, but my job skills have increased a lot since I've been at Cookie Cart including professional appearance and presentation.

When I was younger, I wanted to work in a bakery and make it my career. But while working at the Cookie Cart, and going on tours to all these different places, it made me realize that working in an office setting is something I would rather do.

Planning for college

At first I just wanted to go to college but now, I want to go so I can be better and give back the way Cookie Cart gave to me.

I believe the ability to commit to a job and earn the experiences there will help me get into college, because I plan to find a part time job during this time to support myself. Therefore, college is one step closer.

I have thought about my future education since I started working at Cookie Cart.

The way I communicate with other people has increased, which will be very helpful to me when I go to college or apply for another job.

Learning how to work with others

I learned a lot. Not just the name Cookie Cart, but the peers and adults who worked there. It showed me an ideal of what to expect from a person or group that I worked with.

I've become a better person working with others.

My attitude has changed, and I've learned how to help out others.

Improved or increased job skills

Cookie Cart teaches me things that most places won't, like helping me get another job after this, and how to do a resume.

I'm glad that I get to experience and improve some of my job skills at Cookie Cart.

Taking a financial class

I don't know much about saving money other than hearing from others. When I started to work here as a Cookie Cart employee, we had classes that taught us about finances that related to us now and in the future when we are in college or retire.

The money class overall has changed my mind. It has taught me how to do a lot of stuff that has to do with money and how to save, etc. when I get out of college.

Effect of Cookie Cart employment on grades and homework completion

As in previous years, youth were asked whether they believed their work experience at Cookie Cart had any effect on their grades in school. In the current study period, half (50%) of the youth said working at Cookie Cart had no effect on their grades, compared to more than half (56%) who reported no effect on grades in the previous year. Also this year, 50 percent of youth respondents reported improvement in their grades - a substantial increase from the previous year (33%) that they felt could be at least partly attributed to their Cookie Cart experience. In 2013, program staff introduced a requirement that youth employees must maintain a C grade average in school to avoid having their work hours reduced. Participants must bring their grade reports at the end of each semester.

Also in the current year, participating youth were asked a new question to learn whether they were more or less likely to complete their homework on time since working at Cookie Cart. One third (33%) of youth respondents reported that they were more likely to do so, while 16 percent of youth reported that they were less likely to complete their homework on time since working at Cookie Cart. Nearly half (48%) of the youth respondents said there was no change.

What youth learned from Cookie Cart staff

As in previous years, youth were asked to describe in their own words what they learned from the adult staff. The most commonly mentioned learnings were: specific job skills, working with others, responsible behavior, positive and respectful work attitudes, properly presenting oneself for work or an interview, good customer service, and being on time. These areas are identical to the most commonly mentioned by youth in the previous evaluation year, 2013. This finding could be reflective of common elements emphasized in the Cookie Cart training programs. Twenty-five participants provided comments which are presented in summary form below. (Figure 10).

10. In their own words: Things youth learned from Cookie Cart staff (N=25)

	Number	Percent
Specific job skills	12	48%
Working with others	10	40%
Responsible behavior	10	40%
Positive and respectful work attitude	8	32%
Properly presenting for work/interview	6	24%
Good customer service	4	16%
Time management	2	8%

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

Youth comments of things learned from adult staff follow:

Specific job skills

I learned communication skills (7)How to start a random conversation with other people about Cookie Cart (1)

I learned networking skills (1)

I learned how to leave a voice mail (1)

How to talk proper (1)

How to pack orders (1)

Working with others

Team work is what gets the job done faster/teamwork (6)

I learned how to make small talk (1)

To be more supportive (1)

Be a role model (1)

Be a leader (1)

Responsible behavior

Show responsibility (2)

Self-advocate (1)

Occupy yourself during work (1)

How to carry myself inside and outside of work (1)

Manage your money (1)

Call in if you will be late or cannot show up (1)

Learn from your mistakes (1)

Ask questions if you are confused or not sure (1)

Being on time (1)

Positive and respectful work attitude

How to talk in a respectful manner (3)

To always be positive – stay positive (2)

How to be a great employee (1)

Have good manners and character (1)

Be willing (1)

Properly presenting for work or interview

Talking proper (1)

Be yourself. It attracts more employers when you stand out (1)

You want to have good impressions, so smile often (1)

Smiling or have a friendly mask on when you are in the workplace (1)

Have a professional appearance (1)

How to express oneself at sales events (1)

Good customer service

Customer service skills (2)

How to serve people (1)

How to greet people (1)

Time management

Managing your time (2)

Other

Cookie Cart wants to do more than just help you make a cookie. They want you to be something bigger outside of cookie cart. (1)

Being confident (1)

*Do not allow what you are going through right now determine what you do in your future
Stand up for what you believe (1)*

360 Degrees (1)

The importance of National Career Readiness Certification (1)

Always smile (1)

Asking for help from adult staff

As in previous evaluation years, youth participants were asked if they felt they could ask the adult staff at Cookie Cart for help when needed. Consistent with previous evaluations, youth have provided very high ratings when asked about confidence in seeking help from adult staff. All youth this year said they definitely or probably could seek the help of the adult staff, compared to a 98 percent in the previous year.

Improvements in skills by grade level and gender

Differences in improvements in skills were examined by grade level and gender. For the 2014 evaluation year, results show that “older youth” (11th and 12th graders), compared to “younger youth” (9th and 10th graders), more frequently reported improvements in the following skill areas:

- Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee (100% older youth vs. 93% younger youth)
- Skills in getting along with other kids (100% vs. 88%)
- Involvement in leadership activities (100% vs. 87%)
- Ability to act as a role model (100% vs. 85%)
- Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money (100% vs. 67%)
- Willingness to carry out responsibilities (90% vs. 80%)
- Ability to set goals and work toward them (90% vs. 75%)
- Time spent thinking about or planning for college (75% vs. 64%)

Younger youth more frequently reported more improvements compared to older youth in the following skill areas:

- Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart (94% younger youth vs. 78% older youth)
- Hope about your own future (93% vs. 80%)
- Knowledge about people from other cultures (93% vs. 75%)
- Ability to interview for a job (93% vs. 67%)
- Commitment to succeeding in school (86% vs. 70%)
- Ability to do something different when things are not working (83% vs. 75%)
- Knowledge of how to dress for an interview (73% vs. 60%)
- Ability to manage own money (81% vs. 70%)

Males more frequently reported more improvements compared to females in the following skill areas:

- Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee (100% males vs. 94% females)
- Ability to act as a role model (100% vs. 87%)
- Knowledge about people from other cultures (100% vs. 81%)
- Planning for the future (100% vs. 81%)
- Commitment to succeeding in school (100% vs. 67%)
- Ability to make good decisions (100% vs. 77%)
- Ability to set goals and work toward them (89% vs. 77%)

See the appendix for a complete table of the improvements reported by grade level and gender for 2014.

Results of surveys completed by parents in 2014

During the 2014 evaluation period, parents also rated the same work related skill areas rated independently by youth participants. Thirteen parents completed either a telephone or online survey. Results should be interpreted with caution because of the small number of parents who participated in the survey.

Figures 11-15 show how parents rated their child’s skill development in each of the following core areas: employment readiness, interpersonal communication, goal orientation, critical thinking skills, and connectedness to new communities.

Employment readiness

In 2014, all parents reported that their children improved in their ability to present themselves as experienced employees, consistent with parent ratings in the previous year. All other parent ratings of employment readiness skills remained similar (less than 10% difference) to the previous year.

11. Percentage of parents who report increases in their child’s employment readiness skills while working at Cookie Cart

Employment readiness skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=13	Year 7 (2013) N=24
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	100%	100%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	92%	87%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	92%	96%
Ability to interview for a job	92%	95%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	92%	Not asked in year 7
Comfort talking to a potential employer	83%	91%

Interpersonal communication

In this evaluation year, some interpersonal communication skill areas not included in the previous survey were added, and therefore do not have comparison ratings. These skill areas are: skills in serving customers; ability to work as a team member; and willingness to help others.

Fewer parents this year reported that their children get along with other kids than in Year 7 (77% in year 8 vs. 91% in year 7). All other parent ratings of skills in this category remained similar (less than 10 percent difference) to the previous year.

Figure 12 illustrates parent ratings of improvements in interpersonal communication for their child from the previous year.

12. Percentage of parents who report that their child has shown increases in interpersonal communication skills while working at Cookie Cart

Interpersonal communication	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=13	Year 7 (2013) N=24
Skills in serving customers	100%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to work as a team member	92%	Not asked in year 7
Willingness to help others	83%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to act as a role model	83%	92%
Skills in getting along with other kids	77%	91%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	75%	74%

Goal orientation

Parents in this year's study cohort were more likely than parents surveyed in Year 7 to report improvements in their child's time spent thinking about or planning for college, and their knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save money. Called financial literacy in Year 7; its ratings have been compared in Year 8 because of the similarities. Also in Year 8, three new skills were added to this core area. Most parents (92%) reported improvements in these new goal orientation skill areas such as: hope about their own future, planning for the future, and having the ability to do something different when things are not working.

In Year 8, parents were less likely than those in Year 7 to report that their child had a commitment to succeeding in school. (Figure 13).

13. Percentage of parents who report that their child has shown increases in goal-orientation skills while working at Cookie Cart

Goal-orientation skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=13	Year 7 (2013) N=24
Ability to set goals and work toward them	92%	100%
Hope about their own future	92%	Not asked in year 7
Planning for the future	92%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to do something different when things are not working	92%	Not asked in year 7
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	91%	71%
Commitment to succeeding in school	77%	87%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save money (<i>formerly financial literacy</i>)	92%	82%

Critical thinking skills

More parents in Year 8 than in Year 7 reported that their child improved in his or her ability to manage their own money (92% in year 8 vs. 78% in year 7).

Most of the skills in the critical thinking core area were not included in the previous survey. These skills are: learning from watching others; ability to solve problems on their own; and ability to make good decisions.

14. Percentage of parents who report that their child has shown increases in critical thinking skills since working at Cookie Cart

Critical thinking skills	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=13	Year 7 (2013) N=24
Learning from watching others	100%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to solve problems on their own	92%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to make good decisions	85%	Not asked in year 7
Ability to manage own money	92%	78%

Connectedness to new communities

During the current evaluation year, parents were also asked to rate three new skills in this core area. These new skills are, skills getting along with other kids; knowledge about people from other cultures; and comfort talking to people of different backgrounds.

In the current year, more parents reported positive changes in their child’s involvement in leadership activities than in Year 7 (92% in year 8 vs. 71% in year 7). (Figure 15).

15. Percentage of parents who report that their child has shown increases in connectedness to new communities skills while working at Cookie Cart

	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Current study Year 8 (2014) N=13	Year 7 (2013) N=24
Connectedness to new communities		
Getting along with other kids	92%	Not asked in year 7
Involvement in leadership activities	92%	71%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	83%	Not asked in year 7
Comfort talking to people of different backgrounds	73%	Not asked in year 7

Comparison of parent and youth ratings

A comparison of parent and youth ratings for 2014 shows greater variation in ratings than in the previous year. This year, there are large variations between parent and youth ratings for nearly half of all skills, compared to variations in only two areas in the previous year. Parents differed most from youth in their ratings of serving customers, knowing how to dress for an interview, time spent thinking of or planning for college, managing their own money, and hoping about their future (differences ranging between 10 and 25 percentage points). Figure 16 shows comparisons of parent and youth ratings in all skill areas. Highlighted skill areas show the larger differences in the perceptions of improvements between parents and youth.

16. Comparison of parent and youth ratings of increases in skill development

	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Parents Year 8 (2014) N=13	Youth Year 8 (2014) N=26
Employee readiness skills		
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	100%	96%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	92%	68%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	92%	88%
Ability to interview for a job	92%	83%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	92%	84%

16. Comparison of parent and youth ratings of increases in skill development (continued)

	Percentage reporting increased skills	
	Parents Year 8 (2014) N=13	Youth Year 8 (2014) N=26
Interpersonal communication skills		
Skills in serving customers	100%	88%
Ability to work as a team member	92%	100%
Ability to act as a role model	83%	100%
Willingness to help others	83%	88%
Skills in getting along with other kids	77%	81%
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	75%	88%
Goal-orientation		
Ability to set goals and work toward them	92%	81%
Hope about your own future	92%	76%
Planning for the future	92%	80%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget and save money	92%	82%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	91%	68%
Commitment to succeeding in school	77%	79%
Ability to do something different when things not working	92%	80%
Critical thinking skills		
Learning from watching others	100%	92%
Ability to manage own money	92%	77%
Ability to solve problems on own	92%	96%
Ability to make good decisions	85%	85%
Connected to new communities		
Skills getting along with other kids	92%	92%
Involvement in leadership activities	92%	92%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	83%	86%
Comfort talking to people of different backgrounds	73%	79%

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

All participating parents were asked if they thought their child's thoughts about their future education or employment had changed since working at Cookie Cart. Eleven parents (92%) said they had noticed a change.

Additionally, parents were asked to describe, in their own words, at least one way their child's thoughts about their future education or employment has changed since working at Cookie Cart. Nine parents answered this question. Five parents reported that their child has aspirations for college and thoughts of a career.

She wants to go to college even more than before.

She also talked more about getting a part-time job in the future when she is in college.

She has not decided yet if she wants to stay in Minnesota or not.

She wants to go to college now and do big things.

College and what career she wants.

My son aspires to be an engineer.

The remaining parents offered a variety of other comments related to how they think their child's thoughts for their future education and employment have changed.

She is way better at managing her money

She seems to budget her money more often.

She isn't so scared during her interview, and is more confident in herself now.

He is better in school now.

Talking to other people - customer service

Working at Cookie Cart has helped him to be more responsible, independent, and more focused.

Parents' report of youth program participation and impact on grades and homework

As in the previous year, parents were asked whether or not they believe that working at Cookie Cart had any effect on their child's grades. This year, six of the twelve parents who answered the question said their child's grades improved since working at the Cookie Cart; six believed working at Cookie Cart had no effect on their child's grades.

In the current year, youth and parents had similar ratings regarding improvements in grades (50% parents year 8 vs. 50% youth year 8). In 2013, parent ratings were considerably higher than youth ratings (58% parents year 7 vs. 33% youth year 7).

Program staff are also interested in learning from parents whether or not working at Cookie Cart has made their youth more or less likely to complete their homework on time. This year is the first time the question has been asked. Seven of the ten parents who answered believe their child is more likely to complete their homework on time. Three parents said there was no change, while two did not know.

Parent's perceptions of what youth learned from Cookie Cart staff

All parents were asked what their children have learned from Cookie Cart adult staff. Eleven parents answered the question. Three parents reported that their children learned customer services skills, and two said they are learning from the work readiness programs offered as part of their experience. Other parents said their youth are learning responsibility, communication skills, and leadership. Two parents reported that they did not know specifically what their child was learning, but they had observed positive changes in them.

Parents perceptions of help youth receive from adult Cookie Cart staff

As in the previous year, parents were asked if they felt their child could ask the adult staff at Cookie Cart for help if needed. All parents surveyed (100%) said that their child could probably or definitely seek the help of their supervisors if needed.

Conclusions and issues to consider

Consistent with previous evaluations, the 2014 youth and parent survey results show that both participants and their parents consider Cookie Cart's employment program an extremely valuable opportunity, and that the program is succeeding at providing an excellent first work experience for youth.

Cookie Cart teaches me things that most places won't – like helping me get another job after this.

In 2014, parent and youth findings show consistency with findings from earlier study periods in that participants acknowledge that Cookie Cart provides youth with a well-rounded, quality employment experience. With classroom and a hands-on approach to learning that emphasizes teamwork and acquiring necessary life and job skills, with supportive staff in a safe environment, participants feel well prepared to find future jobs and think more about their future education.

Current year study results show that the program is achieving some substantial gains in program effectiveness, as evidenced by the following positive year over year changes in the following performance and skill areas.

- Involvement in leadership activities (92% of youth in year 8 (current study period), compared to 70% of youth in year 7 (previous study period).
- Skills in getting along with other kids (92% of youth in year 8, compared to youth 85% of youth in year 7).
- Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts (88% of youth in year 8, compared to 62% of youth in year 7).

Overall, study results show that:

- Youth realize they have job possibilities and options.
- Youth see that they benefit from working closely with teens their own age.
- Youth are learning specific job skills.
- Youth are responsible.
- The most substantial improvements are among males.

Consistent with the previous year, the finding that remains encouraging, even though it is not a primary focus of the program, is that Cookie Cart is introducing more elements within its program to encourage school success among participants, as evidenced by the following:

- Seventy-nine percent of youth report they are committed to succeeding in school, consistent with year 7 youth reports.
- Sixty-eight percent of youth report that they spend time thinking about or planning for college. This is a decline from a 78 percent youth rating in year 7, but still represents a large majority. Year 7 and Year 8 ratings are the highest of all evaluation years for this skill area.
- Fifty percent of youth and 50 percent of parents report improvements in grades that they feel can be partly attributed to their work at Cookie Cart.
- Fifty-two percent of youth said their thoughts have changed regarding their future education and employment.
- Parents trust that Cookie Cart prepares their children to find and keep a future job (92% of parents in year 8 and 96% of parents in year 7), consistent with results of the youth survey which show a similar result (88% of year 8 youth compared to 94% of year 7 youth feel prepared to find and keep a job after working at Cookie Cart).

Additional Year 8 findings are consistent with the findings of previous years and strongly support the idea that participants' have enhanced feelings of job readiness after their experience at Cookie Cart and feel prepared to:

- Present themselves as an experienced employee
- Talk to a potential employer
- Find and keep a job after Cookie Cart
- Carry out responsibilities

In the future, it may be useful to consider the following additions to the evaluation work currently conducted by Cookie Cart:

- Adding specific questions to the youth evaluation survey related to the training experiences offered by the program.
- Administer the youth and parent survey at the time youth participants are eligible (after 90 days of continuous work at Cookie Cart).

- Revise the current youth survey to include a section with a set of questions developed just for youth who have been employed beyond 90 days. (e.g. one year)
- Create 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 suggest that Cookie Cart has remained successful in helping north Minneapolis youth develop solid, transferable workforce, life and leadership skills. This opportunity has continuously helped them grow into positive relationships with peers, work with warm and caring staff in a demanding work environment, while experiencing the value of team work, responsibility and commitment. The evaluation team has no specific recommendations to offer regarding program enhancements.

Appendix

Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade

A1. Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade in school during the 2014 study period (Total N=26)**

Skills	Male N=9		Female N=17		9th-10th graders N=16		11th-12th graders N=10	
	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive
Ability to work as a team member	9	100%	17	100%	16	100%	10	100%
Ability to present yourself as an experienced employee	8	100%	16	94%	14	93%	10	100%
Ability to act as a role model	7	100%	13	87%	11	85%	9	100%
Knowledge about people from other cultures	6	100%	13	81%	13	93%	6	75%
Planning for the future	9	100%	13	81%	13	87%	9	90%
Commitment to succeeding in school	9	100%	10	67%	12	86%	7	70%
Ability to make good decisions	9	100%	13	77%	13	81%	8	80%
Readiness to find and keep a job after Cookie Cart	8	89%	14	88%	15	94%	7	78%
Ability to set goals and work toward them	8	89%	13	77%	12	75%	9	90%
Involvement in leadership activities	8	89%	14	93%	13	87%	9	100%
Comfort talking to a potential employer	8	89%	14	93%	15	94%	7	88%
Hope about your own future	8	89%	14	88%	14	93%	8	80%
Skills in getting along with other kids (duplicate) adults?	8	89%	15	94%	14	88%	9	100%

**A1. Youth reports of increases in skills by gender and grade in school during the 2013 study period
(Total N=26)** (continued)**

Skills	Male N=9		Female N=17		9th-10th graders N=16		11th-12th graders N=10	
	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive	Valid number	Percent* positive
Use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts	8	89%	14	88%	13	87%	9	90%
Ability to interview for a job	7	88%	12	80%	13	93%	6	67%
Willingness to help others	7	88%	15	88%	13	87%	9	90%
Learning from watching others	7	88%	16	94%	14	93%	9	90%
Ability to do something different when things are not working	5	83%	11	79%	10	83%	6	75%
Knowledge of how to dress for an interview	7	78%	10	63%	11	73%	6	60%
Knowledge of how to use a bank, budget, and save money	7	78%	11	85%	8	67%	10	100%
Comfort talking with people of different backgrounds	6	75%	13	81%	12	80%	7	78%
Time spent thinking about or planning for college	6	75%	9	64%	9	64%	6	75%
Ability to manage own money	6	67%	14	82%	13	81%	7	70%
Skills in getting along with other kids	6	67%	15	88%	13	81%	8	80%
Ability to solve problems on own	4	67%	14	93%	10	83%	8	89%
Skills in serving customers	6	67%	16	100%	13	87%	9	90%
Willingness to carry out responsibilities	6	67%	15	94%	12	80%	9	90%

* 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.

** 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.

*** The highlighted areas show more frequently reported positive changes by gender and grade level.

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 future

At first I just wanted to go to college but now, I want to go so I can be better and give back the way Cookie Cart gave to me.

I believe the ability to commit to a job and earn the experiences there will help me get into college, because I plan to find a part time job during this time to support myself. Therefore, college is one step closer.

I have thought about my future education since I started working at Cookie Cart.

The way I communicate with other people have increased, which will be very helpful to me when I go to college or apply for another job.

Realizing job possibilities/options

Working at Cookie Cart has made me want to do big things in life, like own my own business and be my own boss.

My thoughts have changed. When I was younger I wanted to work in a bakery and make it my career. But while working at the Cookie Cart and going on tours to all these different places, it made me realize that working in an office setting is something I would rather do.

After going to Dairy Queen, I found more job offers. It's good to know that I could always switch jobs.

I have always wanted a job, but after working with Cookie Cart, I want more than just a job. I want a good high paying job, something more than just burger king or Wendy's.

Cookie Cart gave me bigger ideas of what to expect and what to do in a job.

I used to try to look for lower-standard jobs before Cookie Cart because I felt that I didn't know much about job experiences and background knowledge. I thought that I wouldn't meet the standards for some jobs, but my job skills have increased a lot since I've been at Cookie Cart including professional appearance and presentation.

Learning to work with others

I learned a lot. Not just the name Cookie Cart, but the peers and adults who worked there. It showed me an idea of what to expect from a person or group that I worked with.

I've become a better person working with others.

My attitude has changed, and I've learned how to help out others.

Taking a financial class

I don't know much about saving money other than hearing from others. When I started to work here as a Cookie Cart employee, they have classes that taught us about financial things related to us now, and the future, when we are in college or retire.

The money class overall has changed my mind. It has taught me how to do a lot of stuff that has to do with money and how to save etc. when I get out of college.

Improved or increased job skills

Cookie Cart teaches me things that most places won't, like helping me get another job after this, and how to do a resume.

I'm glad that I get to experience and improve some of my job skills at Cookie Cart.

What youth learned from Cookie Cart staff

Specific job skills

How to start a random conversation with other people about Cookie Cart

I learned communication skills

I learned networking skills

I learned how to leave a voice mail

How to talk proper

How to pack orders

Working with others

I learned how to make small talk

Teamwork is what gets the job done faster/teamwork

To be more supportive

Be a role model

Be a leader

Responsible behavior

Self-advocate

Occupy yourself during work

How to carry myself inside and outside of work

Manage your money

Call in if you will be late or cannot show up

Learn from your mistakes

Show responsibility

Ask questions if you are confused or not sure

Being on time

Taking responsibility for my actions

Properly presenting for work or interview

Talking proper

Be yourself. It attracts more employers when you stand out

You want to have good impressions, so smile often

Smiling or have a friendly mask on when you are in the workplace

Have a professional appearance

Positive and respectful work attitude

How to be a great employee

Have good manners and character

How to talk in a respectful manner

To always be positive – stay positive

Be willing

Do what I am told

Right attitude, and adjust to any circumstances Cookie Cart has to offer

Good customer service

How to greet people

Customer service skills

Being on time

Managing your time

Being on time

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?

Thoughts about college and career

She wants to go to college even more than before.

She also talked more about getting a part-time job in the future when she is in college. She has not decided yet if she wants to stay in Minnesota or not.

College and what career she wants.

She wants to go to college now and wants to do big things.

My son aspires to be an engineer.

Personal growth

He's better in school now.

She takes things more seriously.

She isn't so scared during her interview, and is more confident in herself now.

Talking to other people - customer service

Working at Cookie Cart has helped him to be more responsible, independent, and more focused.

She is way better at managing her money.

She seems to budget her money more often.

What has your child learned from Cookie Cart staff?

Customer service skills

Customer service

Customer service and how to answer the phones

Always smile

She told us she learned how to scoop cookies.

How to communicate with others

Specific training

She said they have lessons for the students, like work readiness programs.

Her son has learned a lot about financial literacy

Responsibility

Responsibility

How to act like a leader

How to work hard

Not sure

I honestly don't know because I haven't asked, but she has become way more mature.

She doesn't know much about what her daughter has learned but knows for a fact that she is learning a lot since working here at Cookie Cart.
