

Circle of Security™



Biennial report January 2021 – December 2022

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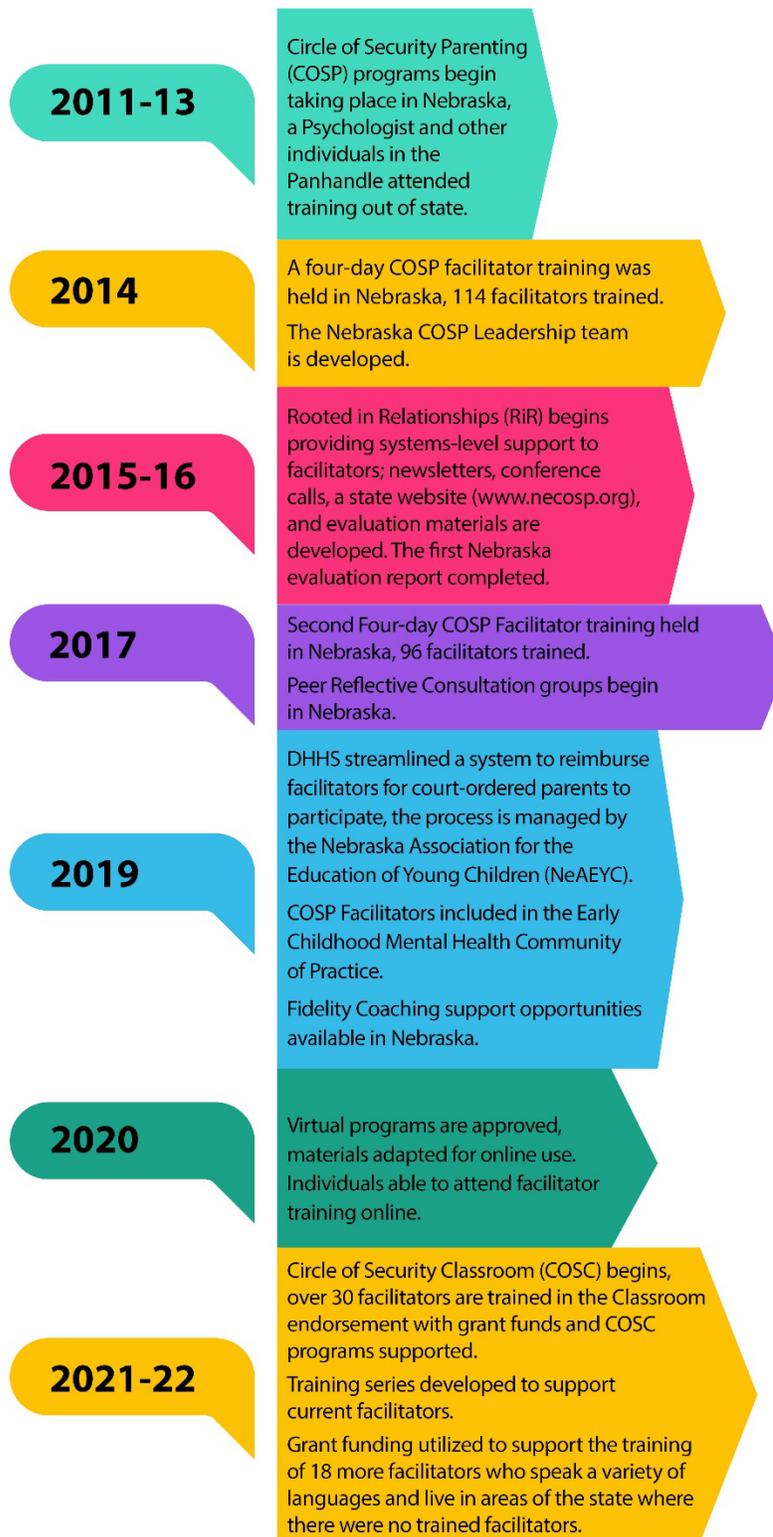
Commissioned by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation



Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation

Collaborate. Evaluate. Improve.

A History of Circle of Security Parenting™ in Nebraska



Over time many funding sources have contributed to the expansion of COSP and COSC, for a full listing please refer to the Biennial Report www.necosp.org/content/resources

Circle of Security (COS) Evaluation

Nebraska's evaluation of COS includes a standardized evaluation process. The data in this report were submitted to Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE) or Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) by both COS participants and facilitators. At the end of the sessions, participants completed a pre-post retrospective survey (available in every language that facilitators utilize) that was co-developed by MMI, NCFE, and Circle of Security International. This 9-item survey asks participants to assess their parenting stress, parent-child relationship, and parenting skills. Facilitators completed a survey that describes the session logistics and provides feedback on the session and their own reflective consultation. Attendance data is submitted for each COS™ series.

It is important to note that the evaluation results presented in this report are not representative of all COS offerings that occurred in Nebraska. COS programs that are funded via NCFE are required to submit evaluation data while other facilitators are encouraged to use the evaluation tools and submit their data for inclusion in the statewide data pool.

This report is organized into three sections: Circle of Security Parenting (Traditional model), Circle of Security Classroom (adapted for Early Care and Education Professionals), and Circle of Security Facilitators. Both quantitative and qualitative data are presented in each section, including participant demographics, outcomes, and successes and satisfaction with the COS model as implemented in Nebraska.



Traditional Circle of Security Parenting (COSP)

Evaluation materials were completed by facilitators for 197 COSP classes held across the state in 2021-2022, serving 770 participants. 75% of those classes were online, 18% were in person, and 4% were hybrid.

Traditional COSP™ Classes Provided in Nebraska	
2021-2022	
Number of COSP™ Classes	197
Number of Participants Served (reported by facilitators)	770
Number of Counties Served	25
Class Format	
In-Person	36 (18.3%)
Online	148 (75.1%)
Hybrid	8 (4.1%)
Class Provisions	
Child care provided	17 (8.6%)
Food provided	26 (13.2%)
Transportation provided	8 (4.1%)
Incentives for attendance provided	34 (17.3%)
Agency/Organizational Support	
Planning Region Team	3 (1.5%)
Sixpence	14 (7.1%)
Behavioral Health Region	6 (3.0%)
Head Start	3 (1.5%)
DHHS	90 (45.7%)
Parent Fees	7 (3.6%)
Rooted in Relationships (NCFF)	22 (11.2%)
Community Well Being (NCFF)	0
Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Funds (NCAPF)	13 (6.6%)
Other	55 (27.9%)
Number of Participants Referred by Facilitators for Additional Services	90
Referred Counseling	36 (4.7%)
Referred Child Care	6 (<1.0%)
Referred Special Education Services	3 (<1.0%)
Referred Health Services	5 (<1.0%)
Referred Social Services (Housing or Food Assistance)	14 (1.8%)
Referred Other	21 (2.7%)

Participant Demographics

635 participants completed the evaluation surveys from the COSP programs held across the state. This is a 26% increase from the 2020 evaluation report. Most participants were female (72%), and White (65.2%). Nearly half of participants (49%) were between 31 to 50 years old.

Who Participated in COSP?	
Number of Participants who Completed Evaluation Materials	635
Gender	
Female	457 (72.0%)
Male	166 (26.1%)
Not Reported	12 (1.9%)
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	10 (1.6%)
Asian	12 (1.9%)
Black/African American	40 (6.3%)
White	414 (65.2%)
Other	18 (2.8%)
Hispanic/Latino	127 (20.0%)
Not Reported	14 (2.2%)
Age Range of Participants	
Less than 19 years old	13 (2.0%)
19 to 30 years old	238 (37.5%)
31 to 50 years old	311 (49.0%)
51 or older	58 (9.1%)
Not Reported	15 (2.4%)
Military Families Served	23 (3.6%)

Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (NeAEYC) in Lincoln coordinates most of the COSP referrals for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in Nebraska. During 2021 and 2022, DHHS referred 651 parents, all who had an open Child and Family Services (CFS) case. Of these, 453 parents participated in and completed COSP.

Child Demographics

1,710 children were served by COSP, a 23.2% increase from 2020. Nearly 87% of participants were biological parents to the children served. Just over half the children (54.5%) qualified for either Free/Reduced Lunch or Child Care Subsidy (Title XX), and the most common age range of the children served was School Age (56.1%), followed by Infant/Toddlers (47.6%).

Who were the Children of COSP Participants?	
Number of Children Served	1,710
COSP Participant Relationship to Children	
Parent	551 (86.8%)
Grandparent	25 (3.9%)
Foster Parent	7 (1.1%)
Partner	2 (<1%)
Guardian	1 (<1%)
Other	36 (5.7%)
Not Reported	13 (2.0%)
Children Eligible for Public Assistance (Child Care Subsidy, Free/Reduced Lunch)	346 (54.5%)
Age Ranges of Children Served	
Infant/Toddler (0-3)	302 (47.6%)
Preschool (3-5)	252 (39.7%)
Kindergarten	127 (20.0%)
School-Age	356 (56.1%)

Reasons for Participating in COSP

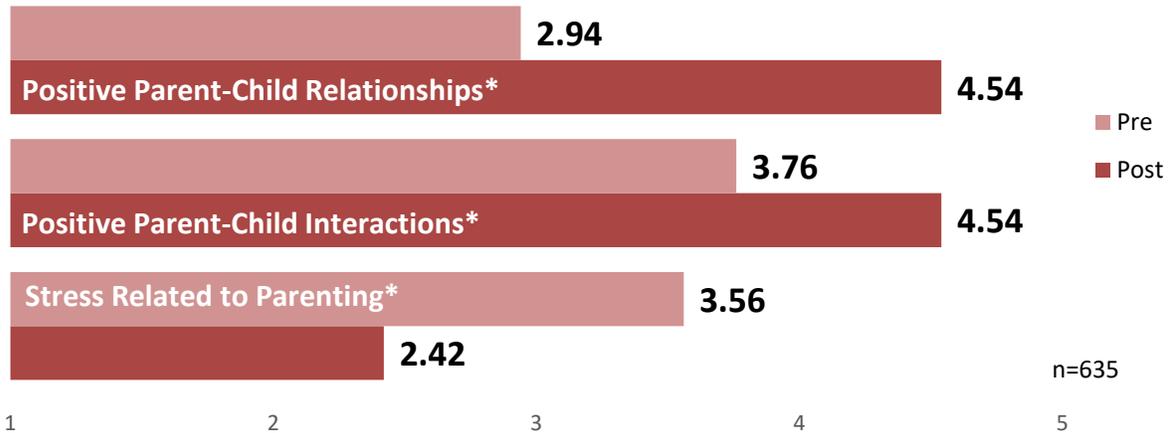
Participants reported on how they heard about COSP. The court system was the most common way participants heard about COSP (33.7%), followed by therapists (16.7%), and friends (16.5%). 8.5% heard about COSP™ from school, and 7.6% heard about COSP from their child care providers.

Participants joined COSP™ for a variety of reasons. Many reported that they wanted to improve their parenting skills, learn how to be a better parent, improve relationships with their children, and gain a better understanding of their children. Others reported that the COSP classes were either recommended by a caseworker or court ordered. Some participants joined COSP because it was provided or recommended by their workplace.

Outcomes from participating in COSP

Participants were asked about parenting stress, their relationships with their children, and confidence in their parenting skills in a retrospective pre-post survey. A total of 635 individuals completed the survey. The results of the data were analyzed in two different ways. First, a statistical analysis (a paired samples t-test) was completed to determine if there was a significant change in participants' perception by the end of the COSP series across the program identified outcomes. There were statistically significant improvements found in all three outcome measures after participating in COSP.

Participants reported statistically significant improvements in their Parent-Child Relationships, Parent-Child Interactions, and Stress Related to Parenting after participating in COSP™



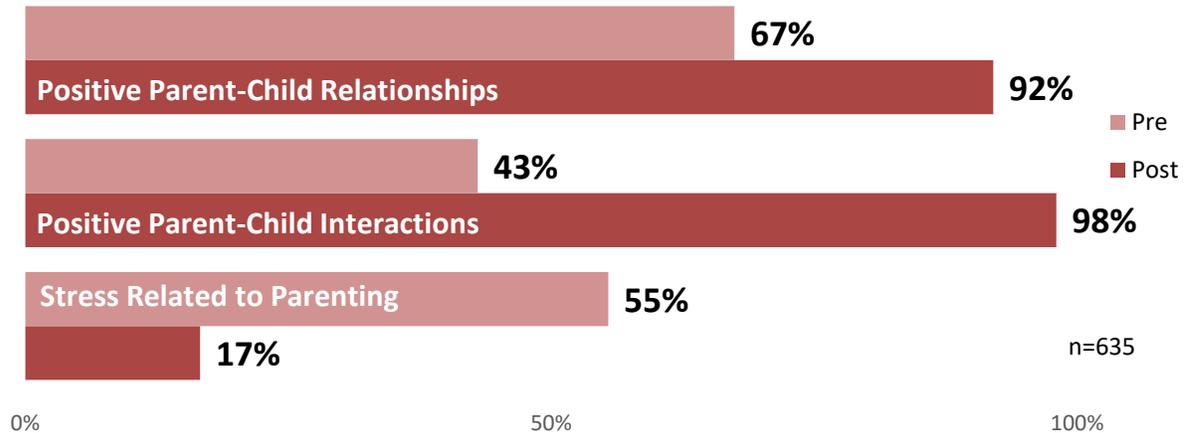
* indicates a statistically significant change from pre to post test

The second analysis examined the percentage of participants who rated their skills positively in the three outcomes areas (a rating of agreed or strongly agreed), after the conclusion of the COSP™ series. The results found high percentages of participants rated their parenting skills and their relationship with their children very positively by the final session. Results suggest that participation in COSP helped to improve parent-child relationships, parent-child interactions, and reduced stress related to parenting.



Participants reported their Parent-Child Relationships and Parent-Child Interactions improved after participating in COSP

Participants also reported less stress related to parenting



Positive Parent-Child Interaction Items: Parents made gains across all areas

The most gains were made using the child's behavior to understand their needs and recognizing the triggers for a negative response to their child

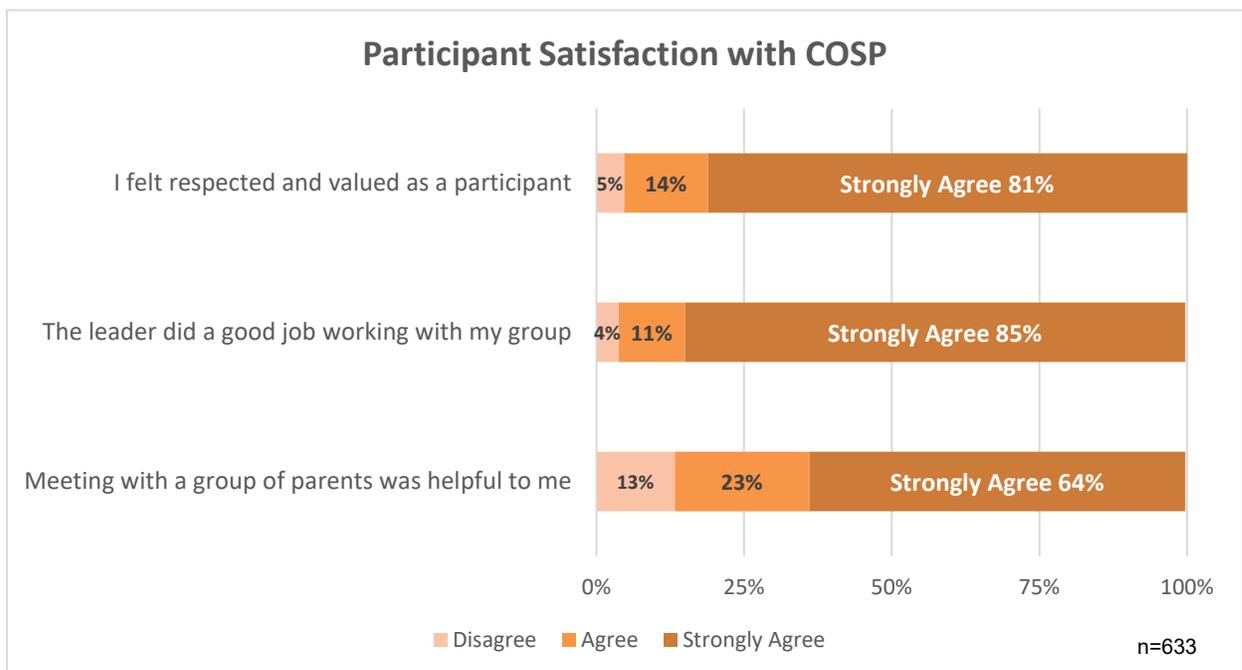


Comparing Online vs. In-Person COSP

Given that 60% of participants reported participating in COSP classes online in 2021-2022, outcomes were compared between participants who participated in in-person classes and those who participated in virtual classes. There were no statistically significant differences in parent outcomes between those who took online COSP classes, and those who participated in classes in-person. This suggests that online COSP classes are just as effective as in-person classes in improving parent-child relationships, parent-child interactions, and stress related to parenting.

Participant Satisfaction with COSP

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the implementation of COSP. A total of 633 participants filled out the satisfaction survey. Overall, the participants rated the group format (78%) and their facilitator very positively (96%), and the majority felt respected and valued as a participant (95%).



What did participants tell us about their experience?

Overall, participants had positive things to say about their experience with COSP. Participants reported the classes were “very helpful and insightful”, and that they “*learned a lot*”. One participant noted they felt the class was helping them repair relationships with their children: “*Understand my shark music played a much bigger impact in all of our lives more than I ever realized it did. This is helping me repair the bond of my older child, that I didn’t think was possible till now*”. Another participant stated: “*I was blown away by how this program made me understand the difficulties of parenting*”. Many participants had positive things to say about their facilitators, saying that facilitators were “*SO helpful in explaining things*”, “*an amazing mentor/teacher/facilitator*”, and “*a great instructor*”.

Circle of Security Classroom Model

Beginning in 2020, Circle of Security International made adaptations to traditional COSP to make it more applicable to serve early care professionals. Circle of Security Classroom (COSC) began in Nebraska in early 2021. Facilitators were able to get trained in this enhancement at the end of 2022. 49 facilitators have completed the training to be able to offer COSC. Community grants, Early Learning Connection Coordinators, and the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) have greatly supported this work. Most COSC programs offered in Nebraska in 2021 and 2022 allowed child care providers to receive a \$300 stipend for completion of the course.

COSP™ Classroom Classes Provided in Nebraska 2021-2022	
Number of COSP™ Classes	60
Number of Participants Served	302
Number of Counties Served	15
Class Format	
In-Person	24 (40.0%)
Online	32 (53.3%)
Hybrid	3 (5.0%)
Class Provisions	
Child care provided	6 (10.0%)
Food provided	18 (30.0%)
Transportation provided	3 (5.0%)
Incentives for attendance provided	32 (53.3)
Agency/Organizational Support	
Sixpence	4 (6.7%)
Head Start	2 (3.3%)
Rooted in Relationships (NCFE)	11 (18.3%)
Other	36 (60.0%)
Number of Participants Referred for Additional Services	17
Referred Counseling	7 (11.7%)
Referred Child Care	3 (5.0%)
Referred Other	1 (1.7%)

Participant Demographics

236 early care professionals completed the evaluation surveys from the COSC programs held across the state. The majority of participants were female (85.2%), White (69.9%), and served children ranging from infancy through elementary school.

Who Participated in COSP™ Classroom?	
Number of Participants Served	236
Gender	
Female	201 (85.2%)
Male	7 (3.0%)
Not Reported	28 (11.9%)
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	1 (<1%)
Asian	1 (<1%)
Black/African American	17 (7.2%)
White	165 (69.9%)
Other	4 (1.7%)
Hispanic/Latino	21 (8.9%)
Not Reported	27 (11.4%)
Number of Children in Care	6,180
Classroom Age Ranges	
Infant	90 (38.1%)
Toddler	112 (47.5%)
Preschool	112 (47.5%)
Grades K-2	77 (32.6%)
Grades 3-6	28 (11.9%)

Reasons for Participating in COSC

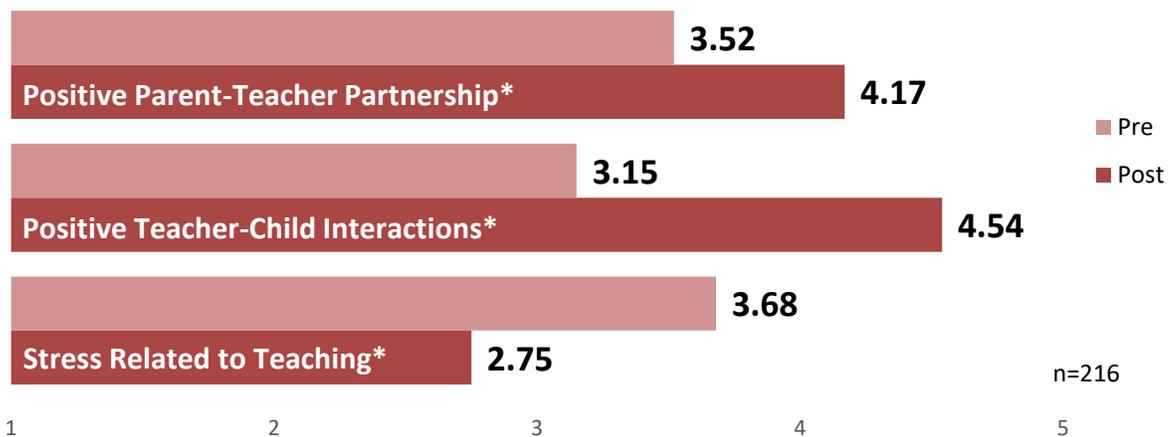
Participants reported on how they heard about COSC. The majority of participants heard about COSC from another child care provider (27.5%) or school (20.3%). 15.3% heard about COSC from a friend, followed by therapists (7.1%). Less than 10% heard about COSC from the court system or print/social media.

Participants joined COSC for a variety of reasons. Many reported that they wanted to learn how to better help, communicate with, and serve the children in their care. Others reported that they joined COSC because their workplace was encouraging or providing the classes.

Outcomes from Participating in COSC

Participants were asked about their partnership with parents, interactions with the children in their care, and stress related to teaching. A total of 216 individuals completed the survey. The results of the data were analyzed in two different ways. First, a statistical analysis (a paired samples t-test) was completed to determine if there was a significant change in participants' perception by the end of the COSC series across the program identified outcomes. There were statistically significant improvements found in all three outcome measures after participating in COSC.

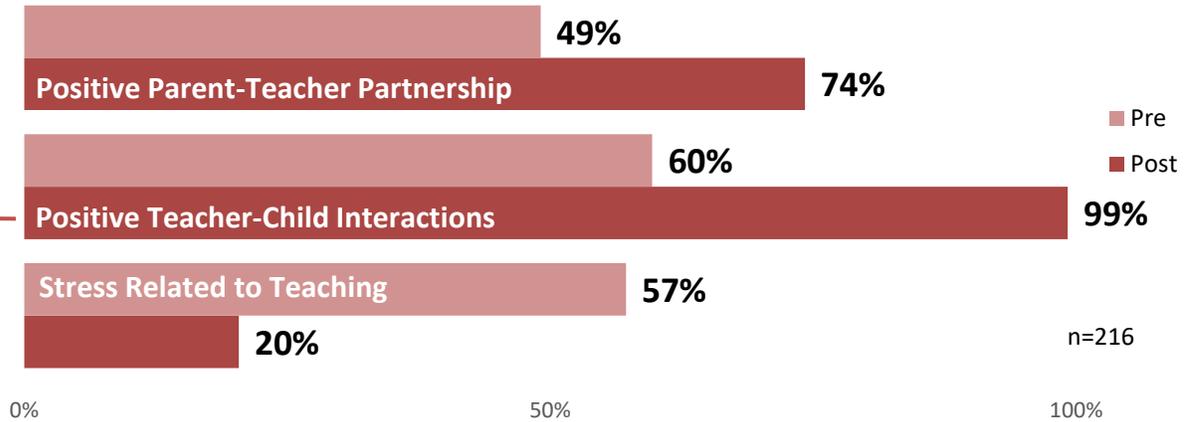
Participants reported statistically significant improvements in their Parent-Teacher Partnerships, Teacher-Child Interactions, and Stress Related to Teaching after participating in COSC



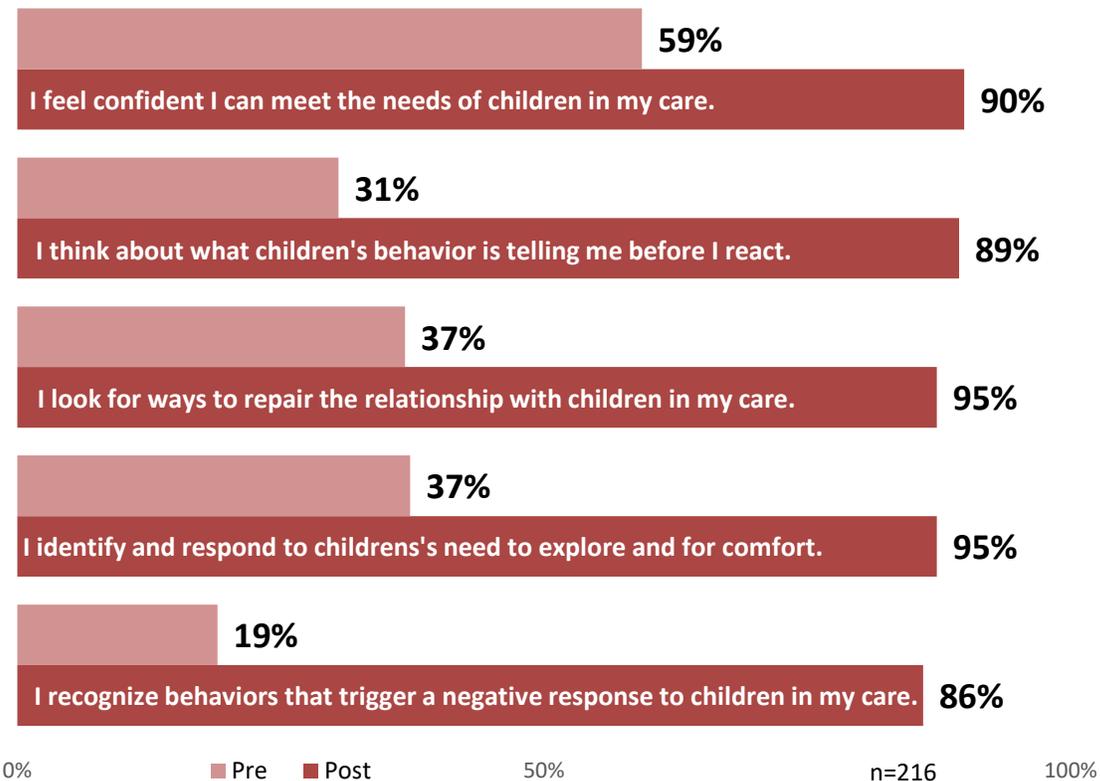
* indicates a statistically significant change from pre to post test

The second analysis examined the percentage of participants who rated their skills positively in the three outcomes areas (a rating of agreed or strongly agreed), after the conclusion of the COSC series. The results found high percentages of participants rated their parent-teacher partnership and their interactions with children in their care very positively by the final session. Results suggest that participation in COSC helped to improve parent-teacher partnerships, teacher-child interactions, and reduced stress related to teaching.

Participants reported improvements in their Parent-Teacher Partnerships, Teacher-Child Interactions, and Stress related to teaching after participating in COSC

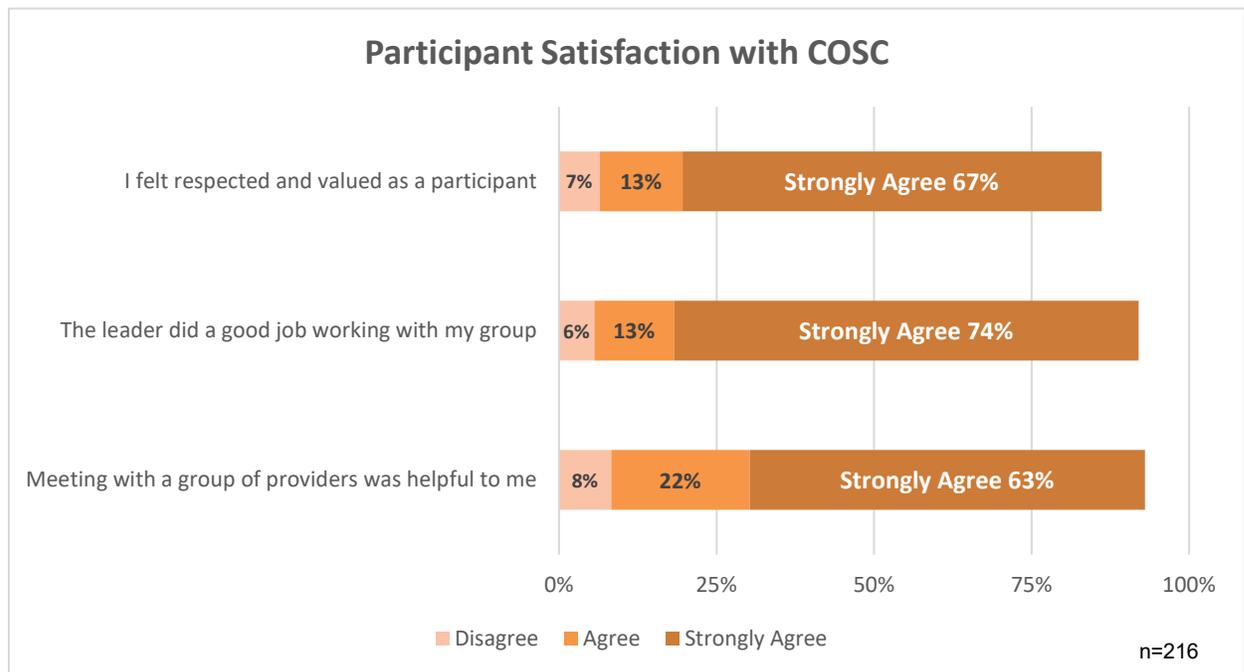


Positive Teacher-Child Interactions: Teachers made gains across all areas
 Teachers made the largest gains in recognizing trigger behaviors



Satisfaction with COSC

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the implementation of COSC. A total of 216 participants filled out the satisfaction survey. Overall, the participants rated the group format (85%) and their facilitator very positively (87%), and the majority felt respected and valued as a participant (80%).



What did participants tell us about their experience?

Overall, participants felt their experiences in the COSC trainings were “*excellent*”, “*very helpful*”, “*authentic*”, and “*informative*”. One participant noted that: “*This program has made me more aware of the individual needs of each child and to be more patient and take more time to listen intently to what they are trying to communicate*”. Another stated “*This was really beneficial. I think all child care providers need to take this*”. A few participants stated that they would appreciate updated videos with content more tailored to the classroom environment to allow for “*further and deeper understanding*” of how to apply the COSC principles in their classrooms.

COS Facilitators

What did COS facilitators tell us about their experience?

Overwhelmingly, facilitators had positive experiences facilitating the COSP and COSC programs. Many stated how much they enjoyed facilitating the classes and working with the parents and providers. Facilitators were encouraged by seeing participants grow throughout the class. One facilitator stated: *“I really enjoy facilitating for childcare providers. They are so passionate about their work and want to do the best they can, and they see COSP as a way to get there!”*

Another facilitator reflected on their experiences leading an all-male class: *“It was heart-warming to see the dads working so hard in class, showing up, communicating their issues...and taking an active role in problem solving. I've also never let a parent join a class after two chapters. However, the late addition was welcomed, and he contributed a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience.”* Another facilitator noted that they enjoyed teaching the COSP™ classes because: *“I always become a more thoughtful parent when I am leading a class.”*

Many facilitators also appreciated the ability to offer COS classes online: *“Being able to do classes online has helped in the rural area I live in. In the past, I may not have enough local people to participate in an in-person class. The online option allows me to still serve my community and other small communities.”*

Some facilitators stated that certain classes they taught were a struggle for them, mostly due to group dynamics, low participation, and little engagement during the classes. As one facilitator noted: *“While I was wondering if this class would ever get it, I trusted the process and lo and behold by the last class everyone clicked.”*

A Parent Success Story

A mom stated she was reading her son's cues more and watching where he is on the circle. While in Walmart she noticed he was getting upset and she asked him if it was too loud. He said yes and she held him and put her hands over his ears. She said normally there would have been a huge fit because he didn't know how to respond. WIN!

- A COSP facilitator

Challenges

Facilitators were asked to describe any challenges or suggestions for improving COSP programs. Most responses were positive, *“This class was amazing and I have seen growth, not sure I would change anything.”* However, a few challenges and opportunities for improvement did emerge that are summarized in the following:

- Attendance
- Technical difficulties with Zoom
- Engagement different on zoom
- Missed and make-up sessions
- Participation during sessions

In addition, some facilitators of the COSC series commented that the videos were more geared towards parenting, and sometimes did not easily translate to a classroom setting. As a result, sometimes classroom teachers had trouble connecting with the COSP material.

Support for COS Facilitators

In Nebraska, multiple layers of support are provided for COSP facilitators. Building and supporting an infrastructure that supports COS facilitators is essential to ensuring ongoing fidelity to the model and encouraging facilitators to continue offering classes. Coordinating multiple grant sources and organizations, supporting facilitator challenges around working with families, and the nature of the helping profession makes this infrastructure critical to maintain the infrastructure needed to have a thriving COS program in Nebraska. Rooted in Relationships (RiR) has offered opportunities for facilitators to participate in Fidelity Coaching, Peer Reflective Consultation, and supports additional training when available. Question and answer sessions about facilitation are frequently offered, and resources are available on the state website (www.necosp.org).

Fidelity Coaching

The purpose of Fidelity Coaching is to assist each facilitator to deepen their understanding of the COSP model as they practice implementing the model; help to deliver the model with fidelity; and to enhance each facilitator’s capacity to support stressed parents to think in new ways about themselves and their relationships with their children.

The Fidelity Coaching structure is designed as a 9-week intervention consisting of 90-minute sessions each week with a Circle of Security International trained Fidelity coach. This is a prescriptive process which involves reflection using a Fidelity Journal that highlights topics specific to the COSP process and at the same time helps shape the facilitator’s awareness of their “shark music” and its roots. Upon completion of the two sessions of Fidelity Coaching they will receive a COSP Facilitator II endorsement by Circle of Security International.

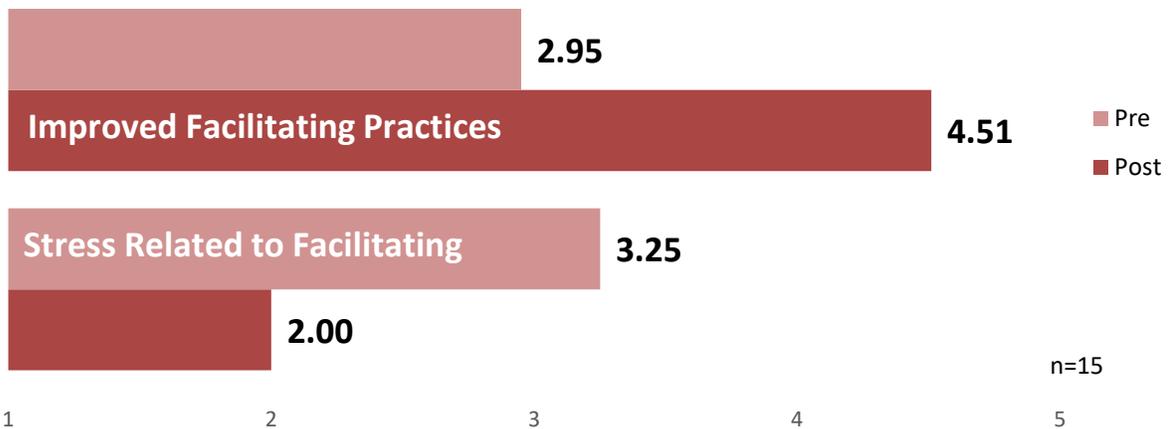
“I feel extremely fortunate to have had this opportunity... I have grown so much as a facilitator participating in Fidelity Coaching.”

- A COSP Facilitator

During this past two years, 4 sessions of Fidelity Coaching were offered, and 12 facilitators participated in Fidelity Coaching (3 completed more than one round). A retrospective pre/post survey was completed by the facilitators to determine the degree that Fidelity Coaching supported building their capacity as facilitators.

All 12 facilitators who participated in Fidelity Coaching agreed or strongly agreed that using the Fidelity Journal and meeting with a Fidelity coach was helpful. In addition, facilitators made improvements in facilitating practices and lower stress after participating in Fidelity Coaching.

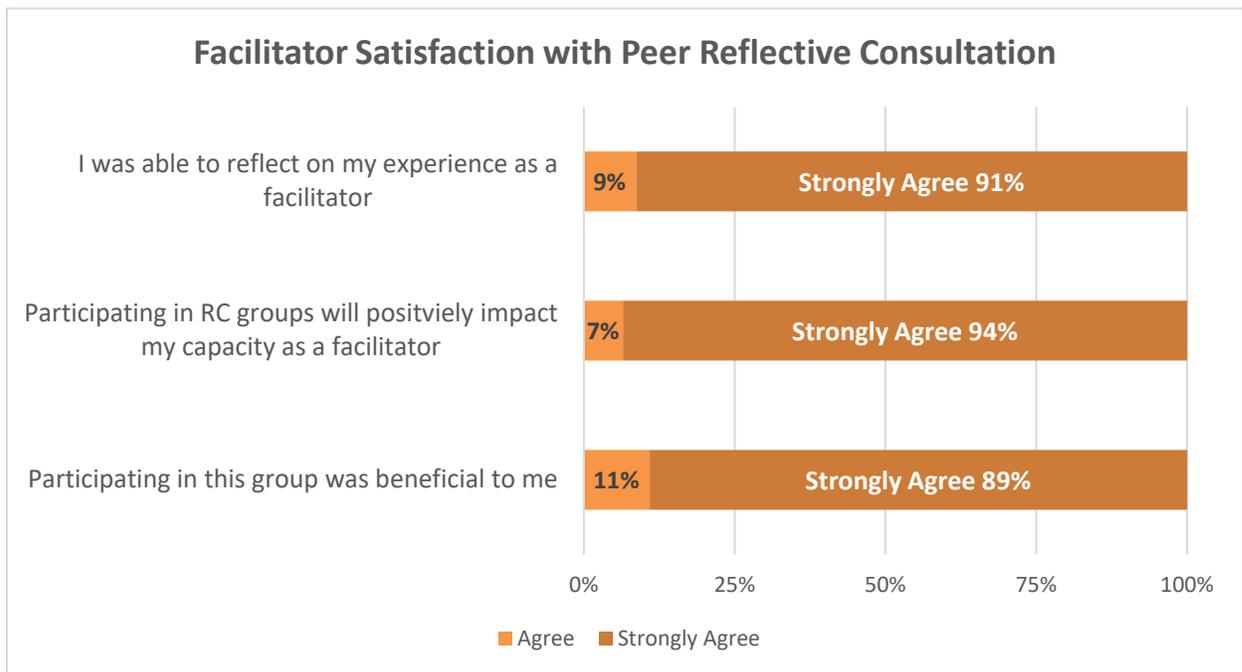
Facilitators reported improved facilitation practices and lower stress related to facilitating after participating in Fidelity Coaching



Peer Reflective Consultation

All COS facilitators were provided the opportunity to participate in peer reflective consultation via video conference. During the past two years, RiR supported four different consultants to offer reflective consultation opportunities. Consultation sessions were offered every other week throughout the year and facilitators were able to participate as available. Facilitators were asked at the completion of the last COSP session to complete a brief facilitator survey to share their experiences. 95 facilitators reported that they participated in peer reflective consultation, with 49% reporting they participated in consultation infrequently (ranging from once to a few times per year).

Facilitators were asked to evaluate their experience with peer reflective consultation at the end of each session. Overwhelmingly, the responses to this survey were very positive. All facilitators reported that peer reflective consultation helped them reflect on their experience as a COSP facilitator, positively impacted their capacity as a facilitator and being in the group was beneficial to them.



Additional Facilitator Supports

A three-part training series was developed in partnership between Dr. Hald and RiR staff to help facilitators in being reflective while supporting all parents. Each session lasted 1.5 hours 2 of the series were offered. A total of 31 facilitators participated.

Monthly Q and A calls were held as an “open office” opportunity for facilitators to ask any questions they had. A representative from RiR, NeAEYC, and technical website assistant were typically on.

In addition, COSC facilitator reflection opportunity was held monthly from April 2021-December 2022, and opportunities to attend Facilitated Attuned Interactions (FAN) reflective consultation training were provided. Finally, replacement COSP Manuals for facilitators who needed an additional language or was outdated were provided.



Conclusions

- The adaptation of traditional COSP to be used by early care and education professionals (teachers) for classroom environments has been successful and met the needs of educators across the state.
- Virtual delivery of COSP has increased access for both parents and teachers seeking to improve their parenting skills and classroom behavior.
- COSP was effectively implemented across communities with parents demonstrating significant increases in parenting skills, improved relationships with their children, and decreased parenting stress.
- Facilitators viewed reflective consultation as a valuable resource as it helped them reflect on themselves, their facilitation practice and ultimately helped them be more sensitive as they worked with the participants.
- Facilitators reported that Fidelity Coaching helped them to lower their stress related to facilitating COSP and enhanced their facilitating practices (e.g., identifying caregiver’s needs, helping to repair relationships, recognizing what behaviors trigger their own “shark music”, and confidence in meeting the needs of caregivers.)

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