



# IMPACT 2026

Through Extension programs across the nation, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators provide a multitude of Educational opportunities to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

## Strengthening Families, Youth, and Communities Through FCS & STEM Education Nationwide

### Overview

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and STEM programs across the United States continue to address critical needs facing families, youth, educators, and older adults. Communities are navigating challenges related to early childhood development, STEM readiness, healthy aging, leadership capacity, and the growing responsibilities of kinship caregivers. The programs represented in this report demonstrate how Extension professionals deliver research-based, hands-on education that builds essential life skills, strengthens families, and promotes healthier, more resilient communities.

Families and communities require support in areas ranging from emotional regulation in young children to fall prevention for older adults. Youth need opportunities to build confidence, leadership, and STEM skills that prepare them for future careers. Educators and professionals benefit from ongoing training to stay current in their fields. At the same time, millions of children nationwide are being raised by grandparents or other relatives, creating a pressing need for kinship-care support. These diverse challenges highlight the importance of accessible, high-quality FCS and STEM programming.

### State-Specific Highlights

Extension programs across multiple states implemented a wide range of educational experiences tailored to local needs:

- **Mississippi** delivered social-emotional development training for families and childcare providers, strengthening adult-child relationships and improving children's emotional regulation.

- **Idaho** offered a sewing-based STEM workshop that equipped adult leaders with technical skills to teach youth hands-on engineering and design concepts.
- **Texas** supported 13 FIRST LEGO League teams, engaging 67 youth in robotics, coding, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- **Mississippi's** *Gray for a Day* program immersed participants in simulated aging experiences to build empathy and awareness of functional aging.
- **Michigan** provided a structured leadership development experience for Extension professionals, pairing mentors and mentees to build confidence and career readiness.
- **New Mexico** hosted a three-day *FCS School of Real-Life Skills* for youth ages 9–12, offering seven hands-on learning tracks.
- **North Carolina** delivered more than 80 integrated FCS STEM programs, reaching over 5,000 participants with nutrition science, problem-solving, and applied STEM learning.
- **Ohio** offered a statewide in-service training for FCS teachers, helping them stay connected and updated on emerging topics.
- **Kansas** implemented evidence-based fall-prevention programs, including *Stay Strong Stay Healthy*, *Walk With Ease*, and *Matter of Balance*.
- **Pennsylvania** provided resources and support for kinship caregivers through the *Relatives as Parents Program*.

Collectively, these programs reached **more than 7,000 participants**, supported by **over 70 community partners**, and included both in-person and virtual learning opportunities.



New Mexico's FCS School of Real-Life Skills

- **Kansas's** fall-prevention programs improved balance confidence, physical activity, and home safety behaviors. One participant noted, *"After continuing to do this class for a year, I can knead bread again and lift the hood on my pickup."*
- **Pennsylvania's** kinship-care program supported families navigating the challenges of raising children outside of parental care, addressing a need affecting **2.5 million children nationwide.**

## Participant Outcomes and Areas of Impact

Across all programs, participants demonstrated meaningful gains in knowledge, skills, confidence, and behavior change:

- Adults participating in early childhood programs reported increased confidence in responding to children's emotions and observed reductions in challenging behaviors. One participant shared, *"The program helped me understand children's emotions and respond in positive ways."*
- STEM-focused sewing workshops increased leaders' confidence in teaching technical skills, directly enhancing youth engagement in STEM learning.
- *Robotics* participants showed strong growth in programming, robot design, teamwork, and presentation skills, with high enthusiasm from both youth and volunteer coaches.
- In *Gray for a Day*, **73% of participants** reported increased empathy and a greater willingness to adjust their interactions with older adults.
- *Leadership Experience* participants gained confidence, strengthened leadership skills, and developed clearer professional goals.
- **New Mexico's** youth life-skills program reported **80% increased problem-solving confidence** and **81% gained new skills**, with many youth expressing interest in returning as future leaders.
- **North Carolina's** integrated STEM and life-skills programs improved applied science knowledge, critical thinking, and real-world decision-making.
- **Ohio's** teacher in-service resulted in **97% gaining new knowledge** and **83% planning to implement new strategies** in their classrooms.



Northwest Ohio FCS Teacher In-Service

## Public Value

These FCS & STEM programs strengthen families, support youth development, promote healthy aging, and build community capacity. By equipping individuals with practical, research-based skills—from emotional regulation to robotics, from fall prevention to leadership—Extension programs contribute to safer homes, stronger families, and more resilient communities. The collective outcomes demonstrate the essential role of FCS professionals in addressing real-world challenges and improving quality of life across generations.

*This report was written by Katelyn Squires (University of Kentucky) and compiled by Dylan Gentry (University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension), along with Dr. Dhruvi Patel, NEAFCS Vice President for Public Affairs. For more information, please email [dhurutip@umd.edu](mailto:dhurutip@umd.edu).*

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Raising kids, Eating right, Spending smart

