Background

- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension operates two Family Resource Centers (FRCs) in Santa Cruz county that provide in-person parent education classes for local families with children birth to five.
- The FRC director wanted to explore the potential of sending text messages to parents as a way to increase participation and retention.
- The purpose of this research was to use survey data to explore the acceptability and feasibility of sending text messages to parents of young children who attend the FRCs and use focus group data to explore parents’ preferences for message content.

Surveys

Data collection
- A paper and pencil survey in English and Spanish was used to collect data about the acceptability and feasibility of sending text messages

Survey Questions
- “What is the best way for the FRC to send you messages?” (Email, Text Message, Facebook, In-Person)
- “Should the FRC send you messages and information more or less than it currently does?” (More information, Current amount is fine, Less information)
- “If the FRC sent you 1-2 messages each week, would you be concerned that this would make your cell phone bill too high?” (Yes, No)

Methods

Focus Groups

Data collection and Sample
- Focus groups were conducted with a sub-sample of survey respondents to explore parents’ preferences for message content
- One focus group included parents from the Nogales FRC (n=14 parents) and one included parents from the Rio Rico FRC (n=14 parents).
- Focus groups were conducted in Spanish by FRC instructors, audio recorded, and professionally transcribed and then translated into English.

Results

Focus Groups

Using the focus group data we identified several parent preferences for text messages.

Provide specific examples in text messages
- When suggesting an activity, explain why parents should do the activity and offer a detailed example of the activity.
- When suggesting parents avoid doing something, provide specific advice for alternatives.
- Provide examples that apply to a diverse group of families.

Surveys

- What is the best way for the FRC to send you messages?
  - Text Message 87%
  - Facebook 26%
  - Email 22%
  - In Person 15%

- Should the FRC send you messages and information more or less than it currently does?
  - More Information 61%
  - Current Amount is fine 41%
  - Less Information 4%

- If the FRC sent you 1-2 text messages each week, would you be concerned that this would make your cell phone bill too high?
  - No 98%
  - Yes 2%

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the parents who participated in a focus group and/or completed a survey. The authors also acknowledge Bernadette Hernandez, Isabel Lechuga, and Stephanie Garcia for their help developing this study, writing the text messages, and collecting the data and funding from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Strategic Investment Program.