Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Changing the School Food Culture through a Comprehensive EFNEP Intervention

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Abstract
EFNEP-Prince George’s County has been developing strategies to involve an entire school, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents, in their nutrition/cooking intervention, which aims to help families and youth acquire knowledge, skills, and behavior changes necessary to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce chronic disease risk.

Goal
To create a “best practices” process for implementing a comprehensive EFNEP intervention to help kids, families, and the school create a positive, healthy food environment.

Objectives
1. To develop recruitment materials and adapt lesson plans for all models of nutrition interventions that will be implemented with students and parents.
2. To outline the process for integrating hands-on, interactive nutrition/health-related projects into in- and after-school nutrition interventions with kids.
3. To create the process for implementing at least 2 health/nutrition promotional activities or projects in order to increase awareness about healthy lifestyles in the school.

Program Design/Methodology
Recruitment
- Limited-resource students at Thomas Johnson MS and Beacon Heights ES have been recruited to participate in the in-school or after-school nutrition classes.
- Limited-income parents at Beacon Heights Elementary have been recruited through their guidance counselor to participate in our EFNEP series.

Partner Role
- Recruit their students to join EFNEP’s after school series by announcing and signing up kids.
- Provide venue to conduct classes.
- Provide hands-on assistance during every class.

Process Outcomes
- Two different series of science-based lessons implemented at Thomas Johnson MS (TJMS) during enrichment/study period.
- Two different series of after-school nutrition/cooking lessons implemented at TJMS.
- Two new series of parent classes (English and Spanish) at Beacon Heights Elem in March – May 2014.
- Partner Readiness Survey and Program Modal Matrix have been developed.
- Developed a template/process outline for the School CHANGE (Cooking, Health, Art, Nutrition, Gardening, and Eating) Festival, along with promotional fliers and bilingual parent handouts/activities.
- Implementation of a project-based promotional activity with TJMS with students; created an art canvas with health messages to be posted around the school.
- Pre/post assessment for all programming models will be analyzed to determine program effectiveness and overall impact on participants’ diet and behavior changes.
- There will be continuous enrollment into EFNEP’s parent/youth nutrition classes at these schools to create greater impact.

Conclusions & Implications
- Partner Readiness Survey and Program Modal Matrix for potential collaborator meetings to determine partner capacity and readiness.
- Students learned about healthy food choices and benefited from their involvement in cooking, art projects, and interacting with school administrators and parents.
- Partnership agreement should be made with a school’s “Healthier Generation” club sponsors or wellness council.
- Strong relationship should be made with PE, health, or science teachers for in-school, science-based programming.
- More qualitative evaluation tools need to be developed to measure:
  - Quality of life changes that the participants make.
  - Level of confidence to change behaviors.
  - Nutrition policy/environmental changes that the school makes before the end of the year.
- Ideally, students and parents at each school should participate in EFNEP classes together (family-based programming) to improve impact.
- An integrated extension model can be developed as a result of comprehensive nutrition programming:
  - EFNEP can teach nutrition/cooking series to both students and parents.
  - FCS/SNAP-Ed can train all school personnel to incorporate nutrition/physical activity into their classrooms and cafeteria.