

Title of Intervention: Teens Eating for Energy and Nutrition at School (TEENS)

Website: http://www.epi.umn.edu/cyhp/r_teens2.htm

Intervention Strategies: Campaigns and Promotions, Group Education, Supportive Relationships, Environments and Policies

Purpose of the Intervention: To increase students' intake of fruits, vegetables and lower fat foods

Population: Seventh and eighth grade students

Setting: Middle schools in school districts in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area; school-based, home-based

Partners: School districts

Intervention Description:

- Campaigns and Promotions: Posters, flyers and other sources were used to promote healthy eating at school. Table tents and posters promoting fruits, vegetables and lower fat foods were displayed in the cafeteria. There were also prize raffles for students taking fruits available on the lunch line or the `a la carte line. Families received a book of ten behavioral coupons with simple, specific behavioral messages such as "serve a fruit and vegetable with dinner tonight." Families got a \$10 gift certificate for returning ten or more coupons indicating they had done the activity.
- Group Education: The seventh grade classroom intervention consisted of ten curriculum sessions, each of which had some common themes that served as TEENS triggers. Sessions were started by playing an audiotape of "Foods for Dudes," a scripted call-in radio show in which students (teen actors) called in with nutrition-related questions that two corny hosts (adult actors) would answer. In addition, a low-fat convenience snack (one that required no preparation and represented snacks that students might choose at a convenience store) was distributed for tasting during every session. Each session also had its own theme, such as "Smart Decisions," "Those Fantastic Fruits" and "A Variety of Veggies." Several sessions included fruit, vegetable and fat-related self assessment and goal setting, progress checks and practice in coming up with realistic options for making healthy food choices in a variety of social settings.
- Supportive Relationships: Student-elected peer leaders helped teachers deliver the classroom intervention by leading small group activities and discussion. The peer leaders received one full day of training that included hands on practice in leading the intervention activities and problem solving in small groups. In the fruit and vegetable sessions, peer leaders guided small groups through hands on fruit and vegetable snack preparation and tasting. Two sessions featured peer-led "Station to Station Food Facts" in which students practiced looking for fat in popular foods like pizza, chips and fast food. "Parent Packs" were another strategy to incorporate supportive relationships, which contained activities and intervention-related messages that were mailed home to parents or guardians. Each Parent Pack contained a short family assignment, a newsletter, tip sheets, an "Ask Eatie" advice column, and several quick and easy recipes.
- Environments and Policies: Schools increased the availability of appealing fruits and vegetables on the lunch line and the availability of good tasting lower fat snacks on the `a la carte line. In addition, most of the intervention schools formed a School Nutrition Advisory Council in the first year of the intervention. School staff, parents and students were members of the council and had the purpose of developing policy practices that would enhance the healthfulness of the school food environment. Examples of activities were developing policies to limit the use of candy, sweets and unhealthy foods as rewards for students and increasing the availability of fruits, vegetables and lower fat foods at school social and extramural events.

Theory: Social Cognitive Theory

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: Teachers, peer leaders, parents, nutrition advisory council, school foodservice
- Training: Peer leader training

- Technology: Not mentioned
- Space: Classrooms
- Budget: \$10 gift certificate incentives for completing home activities
- Intervention: Posters, flyers, table tents, education materials, "Parent Packs"
- Evaluation: Surveys, checklists, observer

Evaluation:

- Design: Quasi-experimental
- Methods and Measures:
 - TEENS survey were used to measure fruit and vegetable intake
 - Lesson checklists were completed
 - Observation of selected classroom sessions were done
 - Student and teacher provided evaluations of the curriculum

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: Not measured
- Long Term Impact: There was a positive effect in fruit and vegetable consumption after completion of the seventh grade sessions with peer leaders. However, these were not maintained in the second year of the program in the eighth grade.

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Interventions may be greatly enhanced when delivered by staff specifically trained to deliver the classes rather than by regular classroom teachers. Teacher training needs to be very comprehensive for behaviorally-based nutrition curricula.

Citation(s):

Lytle, L. A., S. Gerlach, et al. (2001). "Conducting nutrition education research in junior high schools: approaches and challenges." *J Nutr Educ* 33(1): 49-54.