

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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Common Threads: Cooking Skills and World Cuisine Program

Common Threads

Overview

Cooking Skills and World Cuisine (CSWC) is a direct education intervention targeting elementary and middle school aged children designed to increase nutrition knowledge, culinary skills, liking of vegetables, vegetable consumption, and communication about healthy eating between students and families. Each lesson explores a different country's cuisine and teaches young chefs how to follow a recipe, prepare and cook ingredients, and leave the kitchen as clean as they found it. Students that have completed the Cooking Skills and World Cuisine program are able to cook a balanced healthy meal that includes whole grains, lean protein, fruits, and vegetables.

Target Behavior: Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education

Intervention Reach and Adoption

CSWC addresses children's needs by referencing two frameworks: National Health Education Standards and Dr. Isobel Contento's human behavioral change theory for nutrition education. Both frameworks emphasize the importance of individual, adult, peer, and environmental influences on children's food choices. The program considers the current lifestyle, affordability, and availability of food resources in students' communities, while aiming to expose students and their families to new healthy foods steeped in cultural traditions. The intervention is designed for 3rd-8th graders in a class of up to ~25 students organized into consistent groups of 4-5 students. Each group is led by an adult (e.g., volunteer), while the class is led by a Chef Instructor, an educator with professional culinary experience. The number of students reached by the intervention from 2013-2021 totals 21,557 students across 870 sites. The program has primarily been used in after-school, summer camp, summer school settings. **Setting:** School **Target Audience:** Elementary school; Middle school **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components

The curriculum teaches students about nutrition and healthy cooking through a series of ten 2-hour lessons combining nutrition and hands-on cooking. The curriculum includes (1) An Introduction and General Materials; (2) 10 lesson plans for 3rd-5th graders; (3) 10 lesson plans for 6th-8th graders; (4) Facilitator Training Slides ; (5) a cookbook of menus featuring information and recipes from cultures around the world. Every lesson has a nutrition focus that is grounded in MyPlate. The nutrition lessons vary in teaching styles and afford students various ways to connect with the nutrition focus for that class. Each class "visits" a different country by cooking

Educators select menus for each lesson based on the provided cookbook. The Chef Instructor should allow for hands-on ingredient preparation and cooking as possible. During each lesson, students will move around and learn about the importance of physical activity.

Intervention Materials

Materials included online self-paced training for educators, digital or print curriculum, student worksheets and books, access via <https://teach.commonthreads.org>, and recipes which meet USDA guidelines.

Intervention Costs

There is a cost of \$100 for the digital training and curriculum access for a single user for one year.

Evidence Summary

A 2012 evaluation study finalized the current survey tools. University of Chicago academic researchers compiled questions from pre-existing, validated child health and nutrition education instruments, such as CATCH Kids Club After-school survey and USDA Eating Habits questionnaire. Results from program evaluation studies and monitoring and evaluation analyses have proven that this program is effective due to meeting the objective of increasing vegetable liking and vegetable consumption among children within an educational setting. Results were derived from pre and posttest survey research with children, and data were analyzed for statistical significance, which was achieved for liking and consumption objectives. An article in a 2016 Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior edition summarizes a quasi-experimental pre and post survey research of participating students and their families in Cooking Skills World Cuisine. The following outcomes were statistically significant and continue to be reported by students who participate in this program: Increased vegetable consumption Increased exposure to fruits and vegetables Increased fruit consumption Increased willingness to try new foods Increased cooking self-efficacy Increased meal preparation at home:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27575849/> **Evidence-based Approach:** Research-tested

Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

	Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)	Changes – Medium Term (MT)	Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)	Population Results (R)
Individual	ST1 , ST2	MT1 , MT2		
Environmental Settings				
Sectors of Influence				

Changes in the following indicators were achieved as measured through the CSWC pre/post outcome survey:

- ST1b: Intention or goal setting around Vegetables
- ST1c: Intention or goal setting around Lean Proteins

- ST1d: Intention or goal setting around Whole Grains
- ST1f: Find your healthy eating style and maintain it for a lifetime
- ST1g: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables – vary your veggies.
- ST2b: Read nutrition facts label or nutrition ingredients lists
- MT1d: Ate more than one kind of vegetable
- MT2b: Read nutrition facts labels or nutrition ingredients lists

Evaluation Materials

Evaluation materials are available in PDF and digital administration and include pre and post surveys for child participants that include questions that align with several short-term and medium-term SNAP-Ed Framework indicators for healthy eating, food safety, and food resource management.

Additional Information

Website: The Common Threads Program website (www.CommonThreads.org) contains streamlined access to recipes and more programmatic details. **Contact Person(s):** Stephanie Folkens Email: teachers@commonthreads.org Phone: 312-462-0719