

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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Culture of Wellness in Preschools: Nutrition Education and Physical Activity (COWP NE/PA)

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Overview

Culture of Wellness in Preschools: Nutrition Education and Physical Activity (COWP NE/PA) is a direct education and PSE change intervention designed to increase fruit and vegetable intake and physical activity levels in children and their parents, as well as to reduce their risk of obesity and chronic disease. In addition to providing nutrition education and physical activity in the classrooms, COWP works with Head Start Agencies and other preschool centers to identify and change school PSEs around nutrition and physical activity by working with preschool wellness teams to impact the health of the students and their families. COWP is also designed to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Reducing Screen Time
Intervention Type: Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

COWP NE/PA targets preschool children and parents in childcare/classroom settings. Since 2017, COWP NE/PA has expanded to partner with approximately 125 preschools in 13 counties. Partner sites reach participants via direct (NE/PA classroom lessons) and indirect programming (NE family letters). By partnering with preschools who serve SNAP-Ed eligible populations, we can ensure the program is reaching the intended audience. The preschool setting is ideal for early childhood obesity prevention programs as many preschool-aged children spend time in center-based care where children attending full-time may consume up to two-thirds of their daily caloric intake in this environment. **Setting:** Childcare (Learn) **Target Audience:** Preschool (<5 years), Parents/Mothers/Fathers **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components

- The NE component of the intervention has 15 lessons to choose from. At least 9 of the lessons should be implemented within a school year in order to achieve program outcomes.
- The PA component has 16 PA activities using portable play equipment to choose from. PA activities must be incorporated into the lesson plans regularly throughout the school year to achieve intended outcomes.

COWP staff train preschool staff in the beginning of each academic year. Post-training evaluations assess teacher confidence in curriculum implementation and identify any further training and technical assistance needs. Classroom observations and delivery tracking logs monitor fidelity. Teacher feedback forms improve program quality. Other components that are highly recommended are: The COWP PSE change process COWP PSE intervention as well as [Parent Wellness Workshops](#), both components are featured in the SNAP-Ed Toolkit.

Intervention Materials

Listed are the intervention materials available:

- Pre-K classroom-based nutrition education/physical activity curriculum (15 lessons)
- Family letters with recipes and health tips (English/Spanish)
- Culture of Wellness in Preschools: Policy, System and Environment Change Process ([COWP](#))

The following items are available upon request:

- Pre-K classroom-based nutrition education curriculum
- Evaluation tools (current and prior years)

The listed materials are available on the [COWP website](#).

Intervention Costs

Materials available at no cost.

Evidence Summary

Formative Tools:

- Focus group data: 23 focus groups were conducted with preschool teachers to identify needs, barriers and facilitators to program implementation. Meetings minutes from a day-long retreat with teachers who had used the curriculum in preschool and kindergarten classrooms informed adaptations

Process Tools:

- Teacher feedback forms administered with each NE lesson to make continuous quality improvements
- Teachers are surveyed annually to assess acceptability of the curriculum
- COWP Lesson Observation Form: COWP staff use this tool to observe lessons in the classroom, to gather feedback on fidelity to the curriculum, and to inform potential modifications throughout the year

QI Strategy:

- We utilize the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) quality improvement framework to continuously collect data, make small changes, and study these changes to improve our curriculum and ensure it serves the target audience.

Outcomes that occurred include:

- Leveraging of funds (in-kind donation of teacher time)
- Aligning curriculum with academic standards (Colorado Academic Standards, Teaching Strategies Gold, and Head Start/Early Learning Framework)
- Staff reporting an increase in healthy eating and physical activity because of the program
- Delivering materials to each school provided opportunities for strong relationship-building with school staff and positioned COWP for more impactful work with parent engagement and PSEs
- Providing ongoing training to implement curricula and increasing staff buy-in and commitment

Lessons Learned/Recommendations:

- Quarterly observations of NE/PA Lesson delivery in the classrooms are needed
- Ongoing Technical Assistance provided for new teachers
- Alignment of COWP NE/PA curriculum with COWP PSE curriculum to support the sustainability of these components
- Identification and training of a center-specific wellness champion to help promote program delivery

Manuscripts currently in press with peer-reviewed journals:

- Melnick, E., Thomas, K., Farewell, C., Quinlan, J., LaFlamme, D., Brogden, D., Scarbro, S., Puma, J.E. (in press). “Impact of a Nutrition Education Program on Preschool Children’s Willingness to Consume Fruits and Vegetables”. Public Health Nutrition.
- Farewell, C., Powers, J., Maiurro, E., Scarbro, S., Quinlan, J., Puma, J. (in press). Sustainability of Health-Promoting Best Practices in Early Childcare Settings. International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy.

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)
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Individual [MT1](#), [MT3](#)

Environmental Settings [MT5](#), [MT6](#)

Sectors of Influence

MT1: Healthy Eating

- **MT11, MT1m:** Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables using Plate Waste methodology to measure children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables before and after the COWP NE intervention.

MT3: Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behavior

- **MT3b:** Increased moderate to vigorous physical activity as demonstrated by the SOPLAY method , demonstrating a 20% increase of overall MVPA scores from 2012 – 2016. Increased child vigorous activity as demonstrated by accelerometer data.

MT5: Nutrition Supports

- MT5a: Number and proportion of sites or organizations that make at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for healthy eating using the [COWP’s Evidence-Based PSE Menu](#). Since 2017, COWP has worked with 125 sites in 13 Counties.

MT6: Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behavior Supports

- MT6a: Number and proportion of sites or organizations that make at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for physical activity or reduced sedentary behavior using the [COWP’s Evidence-Based PSE Menu](#). Since 2017, COWP has worked with 125 sites in 13 Counties.

Evaluation Materials

Outcome Evaluation Tools:

- SOPLAY Methods: https://sallis.ucsd.edu/measure_soplay.html
- SOPLAY & Accelerometer results
- Plate Waste Protocol/Results

Formative Evaluation Tools:

- Focus Group Protocols
- All- Day Retreat Agenda and Meeting Minutes

Process Evaluation Tools:

- NE/PA Classroom Observation Tool
- Teacher Feedback Forms

PSE Change Evaluation Tools:

- The Culture of Wellness in Preschools: Policy, System and Environment Change Process (COWP) Evidence-Based PSE Menu/Checklist

Success Story

Creating a Culture of Wellness in Preschools:

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/success-stories/creating-culture-wellness-preschools>

Additional Information

Website: The COWP NE/PA website (www.cowpprogram.com) includes information about the Culture of Wellness in Preschools programs and NE/PA resources. **Contact Person(s):** Deanna LaFlamme Program Director Phone: 303-724-7310 Email: deanna.laflamme@cuanschutz.edu