Harvest for Healthy Kids

Portland State University & Mt. Hood Community College Head Start & Early Head Start

Overview

Harvest for Healthy Kids (HHK) is a direct education and PSE change intervention that promotes healthy eating habits among preschoolers through repeated exposure to a variety of fruits and vegetables and contributes to vibrant and resilient local food systems. The curriculum includes materials for 13 foods. Each month, a target fruit or vegetable is featured in meals and classroom activities. The activity plan includes lessons (e.g., read-aloud book, cooking, planting) and "fast and fun" activities that could be used to transition children from one activity to the next (e.g., clapping out ru-ta-ba-ga). Picture cards are a key feature of the curriculum and show children how the food is grown and its different varieties. The program includes "Teacher Bites" with background information for each fruit or vegetable. To engage families in the program, teachers send home a monthly newsletter, which includes produce tips and a recipe. Recipes that feature the target foods are also available to allow early care and education settings to integrate the foods into their snack and meal service. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

HHK targets preschoolers from racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds in early care and education settings. Harvest for Healthy Kids was developed using a community-based participatory research process that involved Head Start administrators, food service personnel, teachers, and parents. **Setting:** Child care (Learn) **Target Audience:** Preschool (<5 years) **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components

The HHK curriculum includes activity kits for different fruits and vegetables. Each activity kit focuses on one food or family of foods (e.g., winter squash) and includes activity plans, picture cards, educator newsletters and
family newsletters. Any component can be used by itself. Some educators only use the Spanish language picture cards, for example. All of the components are designed to engage preschoolers in learning about fruits and vegetables through, for example, cooking and tasting activities, read-aloud book discussions, transition activities, and mealtime discussions. If the curriculum is implemented in a location where meals are served, recipes that feature each food can be downloaded from our website. The curriculum was designed to be flexible to increase usability.

**Intervention Materials**

The HHK curriculum includes activity plans, picture cards, educator newsletters, and family newsletters for 13 fruits and vegetables. The curriculum is aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

**Intervention Materials**

Materials are available at no cost.

**Evidence Summary**

Pre-post surveys and a post intervention focus group with Head Start teachers were used for evaluation. The curriculum had a high level of perceived acceptability, understanding, and feasibility before and after the intervention. A quasi-experimental pilot study with comparison, low-intervention (foodservice only) and high-intervention (foodservice and curriculum) measured willingness to try and liking of target fruits and vegetables among preschoolers. The difference between pre- and post-intervention willingness to try and liking of target foods was statistically significant for a variety of foods. Teachers perceived the curriculum to be acceptable, understandable, and feasible to implement and that implementation requires greater systems level support than originally anticipated. Teachers stressed the importance of having access to readily available curriculum and supplies, training to implement the curriculum, and curriculum alignment with school readiness goals for children for easy integration into their classrooms.

- A Community-Based Participatory Research Approach to Developing the Harvest for Healthy Kids Curriculum
- Harvest for Healthy Kids: A nutrition education curriculum aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework
- Harvest for Healthy Kids Pilot Study: Associations Between Exposure to a Farm-to-Preschool Intervention and Willingness to Try and Liking of Target Fruits and Vegetables Among Low-Income Children in Head Start

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Results (R)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>ST1</strong></td>
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<td>Environmental Settings</td>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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- **ST1**: Willingness to try target fruits and vegetables
  - Proportion of children willing to try the target foods increased significantly from pre- to post-intervention for all 9 target foods. For example, 55% of children were willing to try rutabaga pre-intervention vs 84% post-intervention.

### Evaluation Materials

Evaluation materials, including surveys, are available upon request.

### Additional Information

**Website**: The HHK website ([www.harvestforhealthykids.org](http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org)) includes intervention materials, resources and detailed information about the intervention. **Contact Person**: Betty Izumi 503-725-5102 Izumibet@pdx.edu