

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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Husky Reads: A Food and Nutrition Literacy Program for Preschool Children

Center for Population Health, UCONN Health

Overview

Husky Reads is a direct education intervention designed to promote nutrition and literacy among preschool children. Husky Reads works in conjunction with three other programs (Husky Nutrition On-the-Go for parents, Little City Sprouts nutrition and gardening program, and technical assistance for policy changes) to form coordinated education and environmental change efforts for early childhood education (ECE). The curriculum includes a series of 10 weekly lessons lasting 30 minutes each that introduce the preschool-age children to MyPlate while improving fruit and vegetable literacy. Each lesson includes reading at least one children's book, an activity or game, and food tasting to complement the learning objectives. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education

Intervention Reach and Adoption

HR targets preschool children at early childhood education centers. In 2018, 1,977 children at 25 sites completed the 10-week program, and 938 children at 20 sites were exposed to a shorter version during the summer. With over 75% of preschool children in Hartford, Connecticut enrolled in these sites, targeting them allows for significant coverage increased by cycling the intervention across eligible sites. **Setting:** Child care (Learn), Other: sites such as family resources centers, libraries, and WIC clinics when a consistent group of children are available. **Target Audience:** Preschool (<5 years) **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components

The intervention includes the Husky Reads curriculum for preschool children and a service-learning course. College students enrolled in the course visit preschool classes weekly to deliver the ten, 30-minute Husky Reads lessons. Lessons include reading age-appropriate book(s), an activity, and food tasting aligned with the learning objectives. The course includes a syllabus with the program schedule, assignments, and training on lesson delivery. Implementation requires a manager and staff to coordinate outreach to ECEs, recruit students, teach the course and prepare supplies and transportation each week.

Intervention Materials

Intervention materials are available on the [Husky Reads curriculum webpage](#). Husky Reads Curriculum:

- Detailed lessons for each of 10 weeks which include lesson outlines and objectives, lists of recommended books, and a description of activities and games that can be adjusted for different age groups
- Source list for materials and books

Service Learning Class:

- Course syllabus
- Student reporting and reflection forms
- Role of the supporting SNAP-Ed program manager

Intervention Costs

Materials available at no cost.

Evidence Summary

HR significantly increased children’s ability to correctly identify two types of fruits and vegetables, and identifying the produce significantly correlated with trying it. In 2018, HR initiated a controlled trial (clinicaltrials.gov, NCT0338257) that follows a pre-test/post-test control group design with children nested within classrooms at center and school-based early care programs. Preliminary results are in the following reports.

- [2018 Formative Evaluation Report](#)
- [2018 Outcome Evaluation Report](#)
- [2018 Process Evaluation Report](#)

Evidence-based Approach: Practice-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			

Sectors of Influence

- ST1: Healthy Eating: In a pilot study, 159 preschool students in 13 classrooms significantly increased recognition of vegetables from 2.9 to 3.3 out of 8 vegetables but not with fruit. Teachers completing the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the given lesson increased children's knowledge of healthy food options, increased children's willingness to try new foods, and increased children's recognition of MyPlate.

Evaluation Materials

Fidelity checks for each lesson are available on the [Husky Reads Curriculum webpage](#). Additional tools include: Carraway-Stage et al.'s Fruit and Vegetable Preference Tool (*Appetite*, 2014;75:11-20), the Building a Healthy Me! Survey developed by Larsen et al. (*J. Sch Health*. 2107;87:36-46), and the EFNEP Eat Well + Move survey.

Additional Information

Website: The HuskyReads.org web page provides information of this specific program and describes how this program fits into other [Center for Population Health SNAP-ED early childcare interventions](#). **Contact Person:** Erin Havens Research Associate 860-679-8515 havens@uchc.edu