Teen Battle Chef (TBC)

Family Cook Productions

Overview

Teen Battle Chef (TBC) is a direct education, social marketing, and PSE change intervention designed to develop skills in nutrition, cooking, and leadership for participants and their families through cooking lessons, a PSE campaign, ongoing nutrition education, development of youth leaders, and supporting a culture of wellness in partner organizations. TBC includes eight sessions in which participants learn plant-focused recipes and cooking skills to compete in cooking battles. After eight weeks of skill development, the Teen Chefs choose one of four tracts to impact PSE change. The four tracts are bundled with the curriculum license and include School Food Ambassadors (for collaborating with schools’ food service), Special Event Headliners (for ensuring healthy options at School Events), CHEFS 4 Change (program for youth collaboration with local bodegas to support healthy ‘grab n’ go’ options), and Culinary Coaches (teaching other students healthy meal/snack strategies). TBC School Food Ambassadors have been effectively utilized as partners with school food service to co-develop new school menu items and promote them with demos and sampling. This active collaborative creates peer-driven motivation for more students to participate in school lunch and breakfast, which is easily measured through school food service participation rates. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Reducing Screen Time, Food Insecurity/Food Assistance **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, Social Marketing, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

TBC targets middle school and high school students aged 11-17 years of all income levels in a variety of settings. TBC has been adopted in over 200 sites in 26 states, some by SNAP-Ed grants in CA, WA, NJ, NY, etc. The program has also been utilized with ESL and special education populations. This 12-year-old nationally disseminated nutrition education program is based on social cognitive, social-ecological, and self-determination theories. **Setting:** Community gardens, School gardens, Community (Live), Faith-based community, Health care, Indian Tribal Organizations, Retail (Shop/Eat), School (Learn), USDA program sites (not National School Lunch Program) **Target Audience:** Middle School, High School **Race/Ethnicity:** All
Intervention Components

TBC includes eight nutrition education and cooking lessons and five team cooking “battles” followed by a PSE Change/Social Marketing campaign of the site’s choosing led by the Teen Chefs. These intervention components provide the knowledge and skills for students and their families to make healthy food choices. Participants learn plant-focused recipes, complete with ethnic background and nutrition profile. Recipe concepts translate to home with affordable, accessible ingredients. Teams compete in weekly cooking battles, practicing and demonstrating their new skills. Youth are given a public platform to share new skills with peers and the community. After a semester of skill development, the food-skilled youth leaders tackle Policy, System and Environmental changes in their school or community.

Intervention Materials

Intervention materials can be ordered by contacting Family Cook Productions via the website. Family Cook Productions helps facilitate all equipment purchases/donations. Intervention materials for include:

- Curriculum toolkit: a PDF with embedded links for each document, including program measures and session ‘blocks’
- Leadership Toolkits: included in the curriculum document, covering policy, system and environmental leadership activities for promotion by Teen Battle Chefs
- Cooking tools: available at manufacturer discount price
- Sample food orders

TBC requires participation in tailored facilitator trainings before implementing the program. The training is offered via three modes:

- Pre-training videos with a deconstructed lesson, culinary 101, food safety, etc.
- Live, hands-on training (can be virtual)
- Program management webinar

Intervention Costs

It is $400 for the curriculum license which includes over $700 of cooking equipment from program cookware sponsor. Each year limited funding for mini-grants is available to cover the curriculum license.

Evidence Summary

Outcome evaluation results of TBC show:

- 90% of TBC alums positively impact their friends and families around healthy eating
- 77% of alums (from 14 different schools) have maintained 4 of 6 behaviors linked to the Dietary
Guidelines for Americans

- 74% of alums maintained a healthy weight up to 7 years post-program
- TBC participants average 10% higher attendance than their school average and they do not drop out of school
- TBC youth achieve higher math and reading SAT score than their counterparts who do not participate in TBC

Evaluation publications include:

- Strategies to Promote High Schools Students’ Healthful Food Choices
- Efficacy of Teen Battle Chef Program to Shift the Academic Performance and Health Behaviors in NYC High School Students

**Evidence-based Approach:** Research-tested

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**Evaluation Indicators**

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

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<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
<th>Population Results (R)</th>
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<td>LT1</td>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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**Evaluation Materials**

The effectiveness and process measures reported in the Evidence Summary were collected throughout TBC and have been used to improve program curricula and training over the past 12 years. The tools provided to evaluate TBC include:

- Pre-and post-program survey (now in its fourth iteration using Self Determination theory and YRBSS questions)
- Focus group discussion guides
- Student and teacher key information interview guides

Additionally, the following measures/data are evaluated/collected through the intervention but are not stand-alone evaluation tools:

- Culinary skill measures
- SMART goal development
- Diaries to share how mood, sleep, energy level changed by focus on SMART goals
- Make One Share One family food critic form
- Student reflection exercises: 12 qualitative, short-answer constructs obtain self-reported data on how learning to cook affected different areas of participants’ lives

**Additional Information**

**Website:** The [TBC website](#) includes additional information on Family Cook Productions, TBC, their other programs, and a blog. **Contact Person:** Lynn Fredericks Founder 212-867-3929 lynn@familycookproductions.com