TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS OF 4TH GRADERS SUPPORT NUTRITION EDUCATION USING INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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Abstract

Fuel for Fun: Cooking with Kids is a school-based cooking program for 4th graders (n=415, 8 schools). To design a family component, professional phone interviews were held with their parents (n=24, 41.7 ± 5.7y) who represented all surveyed parents (n=85)-white, female, high school graduates, 63% eating competent (EC), 54% normal weight. 38% used at least 1 assistance program (WIC 25%; food banks 21%; SNAP 17%). Assistance program usage was associated with greater interest in label reading (P=.022), meal planning (P=.019), and affordable meals (P=.013). Parents preferred programs on Friday (63%) or Thursday (50%) from 6-8 PM (63%) on cooking skills, active indoor and nutrition games. Preferred participation incentives were having a child involved in activities (96%), give-aways (83%) and being served dinner (79%). 3 topics with definite interest were easy-to-fix home meals, food prep with children, and affordable home meals. Families being more physically active was of greater interest than food prep. EC parents were more likely to be physically active (P=.005) and cook (P=.047). Interest in learning food prep was not associated with EC status. 21% read blogs at least weekly but most rarely commented; 13% wanted to learn more about blogs. Children did homework at home (92%), 83% used a computer, 67% of parents spent 30 min helping. Findings support novel strategies and nutrition education in after-school programs.

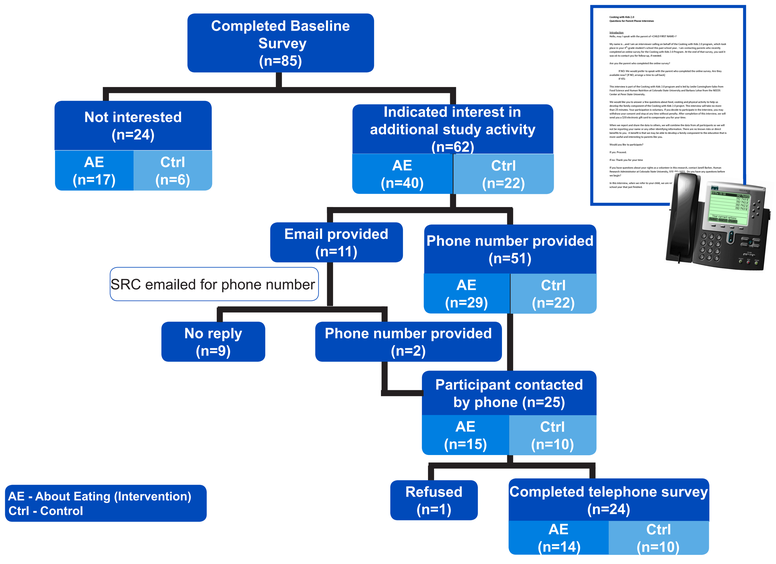
Background & Purpose

Fuel for Fun: Cooking with Kids is an experiential school-based food education and activity program directed toward 4th graders to enhance fruit and vegetable preference and self-efficacy toward cooking.[1,2]
Its long-term goal of reducing the risk of childhood obesity will be addressed by promoting healthful food and activity environments, policies and behaviors through:
1) building and testing the efficacy of a 4th grade comprehensive school-based intervention, 2) designing, implementing, and evaluating a family-based intervention, 3) applying it to an after-school setting to broaden its reach, and
4) disseminating both versions through outreach.

Currently, the family component includes *About Eating*, an online program that addresses food resource management skills and development of eating competence (EC) in 6 lessons. EC is an intra-individual approach to eating and food-related attitudes and behaviors that entrains positive bio-psychosocial outcomes.[3] Being EC does not imply attention to portion sizes, specific foods or nutrients, but rather nutrition education that emphasizes eating enjoyment; internal regulation of intake and letting body weight be dictated by lifestyle and genetics; using skills to provide meals regularly; and eating a variety of foods for pleasure, rather than just to meet dietary guidelines.[4] Competent eaters are more physically active,[5] have higher diet quality[6,7] and fewer cardiovascular risk factors.[7,8] EC is measured with a validated 16-item scale[9] also validated for low-income audiences.[10] EC parents are also associated with attitudes and behaviors that may mediate fruit and vegetable-related behaviors of 4th grade youth.[11]

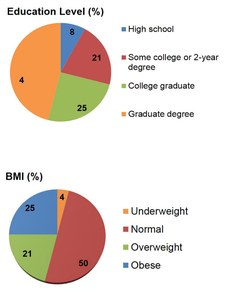
This formative assessment examined the needs, interests, and availabilities of participating parents to extend the family component of *Fuel for Fun: Cooking with Kids*.

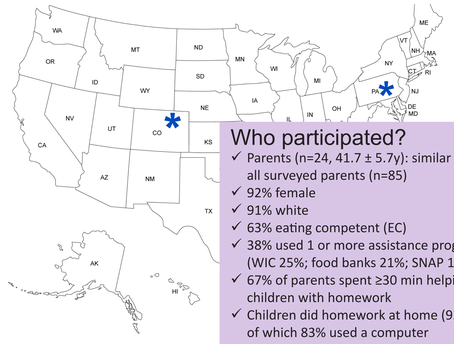
Recruitment & Methods



- Recruitment: Proportional stratified sampling to represent intervention and control groups. 65% of parents completing surveys were in AE. Therefore, 65% of telephone respondents were recruited from the AE participants.
- Study Design: Cross-section, telephone survey
- Data Collection: The Penn State Survey Research Center (SRC) conducted a telephone survey from July 11, 2013 through August 4, 2013. Three phone interviewers were trained to conduct the telephone interviews. Each interviewer conducted practice calls that were monitored by the project team for quality before live calls began. Calls were made from approximately 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (MDT) to try to avoid interfering with dinner time. After the 3rd call attempt, calls were also made in the early afternoon (approximately 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM (MDT). Answering machine messages were left after the 3rd call attempt.The message included a phone number for the SRC that respondents could call back.
- Data Analysis: SPSS v21 (Armonk, NY)

Subjects





Who participated?

- ✓ Parents (n=24, 41.7 ± 5.7y): similar to all surveyed parents (n=85)
- ✓ 92% female
- ✓ 91% white
- ✓ 63% eating competent (EC)
- ✓ 38% used 1 or more assistance programs (WIC 25%; food banks 21%; SNAP 17%)
- ✓ 67% of parents spent ≥30 min helping children with homework
- ✓ Children did homework at home (92%), of which 83% used a computer

Results

Family Fun Night

1. If a family fun night event was being planned for your child's class...

a) Indicate the days of the week you would most likely attend.

FEBRUARY						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
33%	25%	38%	50%	63%	8%	0%

b) Indicate if the time period would work best for your family.

c) What specific features would encourage you and your family to participate in family fun night?

Child involved in activities (96%) | Give-aways (83%) | Being served dinner (79%)

Blog

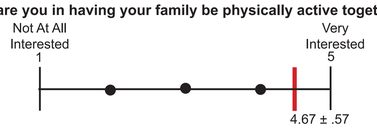
2. How frequently do you read and comment on internet web logs?
How interested are you in learning how to participate in internet web logs?

- 21% read blogs at least weekly, but most rarely commented
- 13% wanted to learn more about blogs

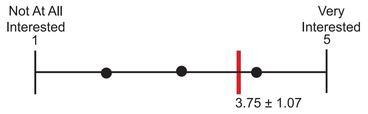
Results

Interest

3. How interested are you in having your family be physically active together? (mean ± sd)



4. How interested are you in learning more about food preparation for you and your family? (mean ± sd)



Educational Materials

5. Interest Topics for Future Educational Materials (mean ± sd)[1]

Interest	Overall (n=24)	Program Assistant User (n=9)	Non-Program Assistant User (n=9)
How to prepare foods with your child	1.29 ± .46	1.11 ± .33	1.40 ± .51
Easy-to-fix meals at home	1.29 ± .62	1.00 ± .00	1.47 ± .74
Healthy snacks	1.46 ± .59	1.44 ± .73	1.47 ± .52
How to choose foods that will help you and your family be healthy	1.50 ± .59	1.22 ± .44	1.67 ± .62
Affordable meals at home	1.50 ± .72	1.00 ± .00	1.80 ± .78
Planning Meals	1.67 ± .64	1.22 ± .44	1.93 ± .59
How to read a nutrition label	2.21 ± .83	1.78 ± .67	2.47 ± .83
How to compare food prices	2.33 ± .82	2.00 ± .88	2.53 ± .74
How to make a grocery shopping list	2.54 ± .72	2.22 ± .83	2.73 ± .59

[1] Possible scores are 1 (Yes definitely interested) to 3 (Not at all interested)

Conclusions

- Eating competent parents were more likely to be physically active (P=.005) and cook (P=.047).
- Interest in learning food prep was not associated with eating competent status.
- 3 topics with definite interest were easy-to-fix home meals, food prep with children, and affordable home meals.
- Assistance program usage was associated with greater interest in label reading (P=.022), meal planning (P=.019), and affordable meals (P=.013).
- Findings supported novel strategies and nutrition education in after-school programs.

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