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Assessing the Feasibility of a Multi-Program School-Based Intervention to Promote Physical Activity and Healthful Eating in Middle Schools prior to Wide-Scale Implementation

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Background: University-community partnerships can support schools in implementing evidence-based responses to youth obesity trends. An inter-organizational partnership was established to implement and evaluate the Healthy Choices Collaborative Intervention (HCCI). HCCI combines an interdisciplinary curriculum, before/after school activities, and the School Health Index to promote physical activity, reduce television viewing, and increase fruit and vegetable consumption among middle school youths. **Purpose:** A modified rapid assessment process was used to explore potential influences on feasibility of implementing and sustaining HCCI before wide-scale implementation. **Methods:** Twenty-one in-depth interviews were conducted with administrators, program coordinators, and teachers who had experience with one or more of the intervention components. **Results:** Respondents believed combining programs would be beneficial because of common behavioral goals. A key leader, an engaged, multidisciplinary team, and parental, community, and administrative support were viewed as being important for effective implementation. Respondents believed sustainability would be facilitated through resources for networking and refreshers on intervention components. **Discussion:** Findings resulted in hiring regional coordinators to assist schools in implementation, allowing schools flexibility in implementation, and reducing the required number of Planet Health lessons and School Health Index modules. **Translation to Health Education Practice:** Findings illustrate the utility of rapid assessment procedures to gauge feasibility of combining multiple interventions before implementation.

Fruit and Vegetable Intake and Obesity in Preadolescent Children: The Role of Neighborhood Poverty and Grocery Store Access

Christina Mushi-Brunt, Debra Haire-Joshu, Michael Elliott, and Ross Brownson

Background: The prevalence of obesity among children continues to rise. Individual-focused health education efforts have been minimally successful in producing the necessary changes to curb this epidemic. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between neighborhood characteristics, grocery store availability and accessibility, and parent-reported fruit and vegetable intake and/or weight status. **Methods:** Data was collected from 797 preadolescent children (ages 6–11) participating in an obesity prevention study. Individual-level variables were daily fruit and vegetable intake and body mass index. Social and physical environment variables included percent of poverty within neighborhoods (census tracts) and mapped grocery store locations. Bivariate analyses were performed to explore relationships. **Results:** Most (78%) children (mean age=8.1) failed to meet fruit and vegetable recommendations, and

37% were overweight. Nearly 50% of high poverty neighborhoods had no grocery stores within their boundaries. Children in high poverty neighborhoods consumed fewer servings of fruits and vegetables ($t=4.03$, $p<0.001$) than children in low poverty neighborhoods. Discussion: This study demonstrates some associations between neighborhood characteristics, grocery store availability, and child fruit and vegetable intake. Translation to Health Education Practice: Health educators should consider how the social and physical environment may hinder positive health behaviors.

The Relationship between Body Mass Index and Adolescent Well-Being

Christopher Latty, Marsha T. Carolan, Jodi E. Jocks, and Lorraine J. Weatherspoon
Background: The substantial increase in youth obesity during the last two decades may have serious biological as well as behavioral/mental health consequences. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess how ecological factors and hence overall well-being were related to body mass index (BMI) in youths. Methods: Three BMI categories (normal; at risk for overweight; overweight) were calculated for 847 adolescents. Behavioral/mental associations were assessed for each category as well as between normal and at risk for overweight and overweight combined. Results: Significant associations existed between BMI and depression, suicidal ideation (combined data), use/abuse of drugs (combined data), race, age, parental marital status, and parental employment status. No significant associations were found between BMI and anxiety, use/abuse of alcohol, or gender. Discussion: The significant associations between BMI and depression/suicidal ideation suggest thorough screening with at-risk youths, especially those from ethnic minority groups and those experiencing changes in parental marital or employment status. Translation to Health Education Practice: It is imperative that health care professionals who work with weight problems attend to the ecological contexts of clients/patients. Data supports the need for collaboration between the medical and mental health communities in this regard.

Changes in Commitment to Physical Activity among 8-to-11-Year-Old Girls Participating in a Curriculum-Based Running Program

Rita DeBate, Yan Zhang, and Sharon H. Thompson
Background: Despite findings that support physical activity (PA) as an effective means of improving health and quality of life, PA levels among girls tend to decline with age. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess changes pertaining to PA commitment following a curriculum-based running program designed for 3rd-to-5th-grade girls. Methods: Participants ($n=196$) were given paper-and-pencil surveys containing an adaptation of the "Feelings about Physical Activity Scale" in addition to items related to demographics, PA behaviors, and curriculum content. Results: Paired-sample t-tests revealed statistically significant differences in overall commitment to PA ($p=.006$) and attitudes regarding PA ($p=.001$) from pre-intervention to post-intervention. Results also suggest increases in value of PA. Discussion: The study's findings have important implications for those public health education professionals who develop PA programs for female children and adolescents. Prior to initiating programs to promote PA for girls, it is important to include educational programs that promote positive attitudes toward

exercise, the value of PA, and the behaviors necessary to sustain PA. Translation to Health Education Practice: Programs that are designed only to initiate PA among young girls may not be addressing sustainability. It is through regular and sustained PA that associated health benefits can be achieved.

Educator Preparedness to Teach Health Education in British Columbia

Sandra Vamos and Mingming Zhou

Background: To date, few studies have been conducted to investigate the preparedness of health educators in Canadian school systems. Purpose: This study assessed practicing and pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of preparedness to teach health education in British Columbia K–12 classrooms. It also investigated factors related to their preparedness. Methods: In 2006, 166 practicing teachers and 78 pre-service teachers participated in a self-designed questionnaire. Results: Significant positive relationships were found between pre-service teachers' knowledge, skill, preparedness, beliefs toward health education, and satisfaction with the provincial health curricula in assisting them to teach health education. Practicing teachers with more experiences in health education reported higher levels of knowledge, skill, and preparedness, as well as more positive beliefs toward health education, but their satisfaction with the curriculum was negatively associated with those variables. They also reported higher levels of skill and satisfaction and more positive beliefs than the pre-service group. Discussion: In light of these results, further explorations are needed to understand current contexts within Canadian school health education. Translation to Health Education Practice: Findings support the need for training and implementation of health-related programs into the education system, particularly the deliberation on how to transform curricula into a more supportive vehicle for health education programming.

Health Education Textbook Adoption in Texas: A Lesson in Politics and Morality

David Wiley and Elissa Barr

Textbooks are often a core element of curricula and delivery of classroom instruction and have long been a source of controversy. The textbook adoption process has become less about content and more about political/cultural pressure. Special-interest groups from the right and left exert enormous influence on textbook content through bias and “sensitivity” guidelines and “review” processes. Textbooks are now often judged not by their style, content, or effectiveness, but by the way they live up to such guidelines. Texas is the second largest textbook market in the country, behind only California. This paper examines the controversies behind, and the lessons to be learned from, the textbook adoption process in Texas. Recent history has demonstrated that health textbook content decisions are often not based in science or pedagogical best practices. Health educators must be proactive in recognizing this trend and work at the state and local levels to ensure that students have access to scientifically accurate, age-appropriate information that can help prepare them for life in the twenty-first century.

Finding Community

Carolyn Cox

Objectives: The purpose of this teaching idea is to describe common bonds shared by communities in order to determine their roles in health promotion. Upon successful completion of the Finding Community lesson, the student will describe at least three possible characteristics that a community might share, search the neighborhood to find at least two communities, and identify the role of each community in promoting health in the neighborhood. Target Audience: This lesson is appropriate for secondary students who are participating in a unit on consumer or community health.

Me Puzzle: Spiritual Decision-making

Ryan Erbe

Objectives: The purpose of this teaching idea is to have students consider components of the spiritual domain in making decisions. As a result of this lesson students will be able to (1) make and explain a decision about using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and (2) describe the decision-making process. Target Audience: This teaching idea is appropriate for health education students in grades 7 through 12.