



Adapting services to keep healthy eating active living curricula in schools

Completed 

Reporting Periods

SNAP-Ed 2020 (October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020)

Site

Liberty Elementary (Santa Barbara County)

Unit

Santa Barbara (County)

COVID-19 Impact

Not Specified

Program Activity

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Keywords

Healthy Eating

School Wellness

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14915

Collaborators

This Success Story has no collaborators.

Story

Background

CalFresh Healthy Living, UC in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties provides a comprehensive approach to nutrition and physical activity programming at partnering school sites. This comprehensive approach includes 1) K-6 classroom and garden nutrition education including cooking and taste testing, 2) positive youth development and leadership opportunities through an after school 4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) club, 3) staff training in nutrition and physical activity best practices, 4) collaboration with cafeteria staff on taste testing and breakfast promotion, 5) school garden support and technical assistance and 5) parent education at school events.

CalFresh Healthy Living, UC in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties began piloting this comprehensive approach back in FFY2016 in order to enhance efforts to promote positive policy, systems and environmental changes in addition to classroom lessons and skill building. This comprehensive approach has evolved over the years to meet the needs of the community and school partners and align with the goals of SNAP-Ed. As the services provided at school sites has expanded, CFHL, UC has also had to adapt to the changing needs of teacher extenders who are under increasing pressure to fit more instructional minutes into the school day.

Story Narrative

The need

In many of the schools where CFHL,UC works, over 89% of the students live in socioeconomically disadvantaged households and more than half of the 5th graders are in the

“Needs Improvement” category for body composition. In addition, teachers face ever increasing demands on their time and instructional minutes with a focus on the core subjects of math and English Language Arts. While many are aware of the research that exists around the importance of nutrition and physical activity to academics, health and wellness are often overlooked if they are not mandated or included on standardized tests. In interviews and informal discussions with local administrators and teachers, UC staff discovered a need for supporting and integrating wellness and health into currently existing programs and activities. Local teachers and stakeholders have expressed that they cannot take on additional classroom responsibilities. Although they acknowledge the importance of health and nutrition-related initiatives and education, they are focused on meeting too many other state mandates and immediate needs. In this environment, nutrition and wellness often do not make it into the school day without external support.

The work

Taking these assessment and feedback data, UC focused on streamlining programming and simplifying the nutrition and physical activity supports provided to partnering schools and extenders. SNAP-Ed approved curricula and curricula kits were improved and shortened to include only what is needed to realize positive results. Pacing guides were updated and streamlined to show teachers the base level of instructional time needed to complete the program with fidelity. Kits were condensed and, in some cases, different and more updated curricula were changed to better meet the needs of the students and teachers.

Additionally, UC staff worked to leverage the strengths of the student leader program, 4-H SNAC, to integrate student leaders more into the lesson delivery and structure so that they can serve as on-site resources and experts to classrooms on topics related to food safety, nutrition, and physical activity. In addition, UC staff, in partnership with 4-H SNAC youth have increased the amount of support for the garden and the connection between growing food, nutrition, cafeteria and home.

The impact

Preliminary qualitative findings show positive results across CalFresh Healthy Living, UC school partnerships. Principals continue to invite the program back to their campus and teachers continue to enroll in the program even as other demands compete for their time. In grades where the UC nutrition curricula have been substantially updated, teachers have expressed positive feedback that the kits are smaller, more condensed and more age-appropriate. Teachers commented:

"This year I noticed that the nutrition kit for classroom instruction was more appropriate for the kindergarten students. I also appreciated the easy lesson plans to integrate into my busy classroom schedule."

"Love the new program resources, work book, and readers!"

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Being responsive to the needs of partners and stakeholders is crucial to the sustainability of the CFHL-UC program. As teachers and schools continue to take on more state and local level mandates in other subject areas, the need for external support that is sensitive to the changing needs of educators, will be crucial if nutrition education and school wellness is to remain present in the school environment.

Favorite Quote

"I do believe that UC Cal Fresh lessons have gotten my students both excited and curious about nutrition, introduction of a variety of healthy foods, and the upbringing of the growth of the garden as it comes to full bloom. Having the opportunity to work in the garden opened up learning to a whole new level. There is a visible connection to science when learning becomes hands on. My students have a better understanding of vocabulary when we discuss such words as irrigation, compost, seedlings, roots, harvest, etc. Students have become observant learners. They ask questions about healthy eating and have the curiosity about the discovery of worms in the soil. I feel, to them, this is the excitement of learning. I believe that having UC CalFresh as part of our educational program has been valuable." - 4th grade teacher, Santa Barbara County

SNAP-Ed Custom Data

Related Framework Indicators

Healthy Eating (ST1)
Physical Activity & Reduced Sedentary Behavior (ST3)
Healthy Eating Behaviors (MT1)
Physical Activity & Reduced Sedentary Behavior (MT3)

Socio-Ecological Framework

Individual/Family
Environmental Setting
Social and Cultural Norms and Values

Approaches

Individual or group-based nutrition educators (e.g. direct education)
Comprehensive multi-level interventions (a combination of direct education, PSE's, and social marketing)
