

4-H SNAC: an emerging model for integrating Extension nutrition and positive youth development

Completed ⓘ

Reporting Periods

SNAP-Ed 2022 (October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022)

Site

William Rice elementary

Unit

Santa Barbara (County)

COVID-19 Impact

Modified due to COVID-19

Program Activity

[4-H SNAC - Rice*21-22](#)

Keywords

Positive Youth Development

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Story

Background

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE in Santa Barbara County (CFHL, UCCE) partners with the 4-H program, low-income schools, students and parents to implement 4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) youth leadership clubs. SNAC clubs are youth-led and meet weekly after school to identify opportunities for training, leadership, and advocacy related to healthy eating and active living.

The Issue

As CFHL, UCCE continued to deliver virtual nutrition education lessons for enrolled extenders at school sites it was unclear if SNAC clubs were a possibility for the 2021-2022 school year. After almost two years of distance and hybrid learning, students lacked opportunities to engage in skill-building activities, develop leadership skills, and have social interactions with their peers and adult leaders through extracurricular activities like student clubs. After communicating this need with school administration and with support from teacher champions, CFHL, UCCE staff implemented SNAC clubs at two school sites.

Story Narrative

How UC Delivers

CFHL, UCCE staff worked with students from Rice and Liberty Elementary to identify their specific interests regarding nutrition, gardening, and physical activity. At Rice Elementary, thirteen, fifth-grade students met weekly via zoom for 7 weeks to increase their culinary skills using the virtual Cooking Academy curriculum. CFHL, UCCE staff distributed weekly recipe kits to students that included recipe ingredients, materials to prepare the recipe such as utensils and bowls, as well as educational handouts. Students learned how to prepare a variety of recipes including banana roll-ups, plant parts salad, trail mix, energy bites, veggie wraps, and mango sorbet. All the recipes utilized in the virtual SNAC club did not require any cooking and could be prepared with little supervision from a guardian. This allowed students to develop the confidence and ability to prepare snacks independently.

At Liberty Elementary, twenty, fourth-grade students were interested in gardening and developing teaching and public speaking skills. SNAC students met weekly in person for 10 weeks to increase their gardening and leadership skills using the Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go curriculum. SNAC students grew their knowledge of gardening, food safety, and preparing healthy recipes. Students completed weekly lessons from the Learn, Grow, Eat and Go curriculum where they prepared healthy recipes and worked to improve their school garden. After developing gardening and nutrition skills, students identified that they would like to develop additional leadership skills such as public speaking and presentation skills.

The Impact:

As the school year ended, Rice SNAC students highlighted their knowledge of nutrition by participating in their school's annual Family Wellness Night. To prepare, SNAC students practiced their public speaking skills and reviewed the nutrition topics they learned throughout their time in SNAC. At the event, SNAC students hosted a garden activity of lettuce seedling planting. SNAC students demonstrated to their families and peers how to plant and care for a seedling. Each family received a seedling to take home. SNAC students also hosted an informational booth with a spin wheel activity where they shared nutrition and healthy

eating information. After participating in SNAC, Rice students gained both nutrition and culinary knowledge to lead healthier lives.

Liberty SNAC students expressed interest in leading nutrition education lessons through peer-to-peer teaching. After practicing their presentation and class management skills at SNAC club meetings, SNAC students delivered lessons to five, fourth-grade classes. From these lessons, they reached approximately 165 of their peers. After the lessons focused on re-think your drink, students reported that they chose 100% fruit juice popsicles for their end-of-the-year celebration rather than popsicles with added sugar. After participating in SNAC, Liberty students were able to not only increase their overall nutrition and gardening skills but public speaking and presentation skills as well. In the 2022-2023 school year, CFHL, UCCE staff plans to continue partnering with school sites to develop youth leaders in nutrition and physical activity to promote healthy schools and communities.

Students at both SNAC clubs provided positive feedback regarding the weekly recipes they tried. Many students reported that they shared the recipe with their families and then taught them how to prepare it.

Due to the innovative work of CFHL,UCCE to integrate Extension nutrition and positive youth development programs through 4-H SNAC, this program model is being replicated in communities across the country. CFHL,UCCE's 4-H SNAC programming is supported through the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture Children, Youth and Families at Risk projects (CYFAR) and SNAP-Ed. In 2021-2022, the CYFAR project, which includes projects in California and Nevada, collected a total of 39 matched pre and post surveys across all programs representing a variety of different modes of implementation from in person to virtual. In preliminary analyses, positive changes were observed relating to indicators of youth resilience, critical thinking, decision making, leadership and healthy eating behaviors. Moving forward, as we resume more in person youth development programming, we anticipate more robust findings in the above areas. In addition, CFHL,UCCE is

working to publish a peer reviewed guide to 4-H SNAC clubs and to seek approval for inclusion in the SNAP-Ed Toolkit.

Favorite Quote

“After the SNAC club, my daughter always shares with me what she learned because I am type II diabetic” -Parent of Rice SNAC student at Family Wellness Night

“I have noticed how [Liberty student] has greatly improved his leadership skills”- Liberty teacher

SNAP-Ed Custom Data**Related Framework Indicators**

Healthy Eating (ST1)
Organizational Partnerships (ST7)
Fruits and Vegetables (R2)

Socio-Ecological Framework

Individual/Family

Approaches

Individual or group-based nutrition educators (e.g. direct education)
