Qualitative needs assessment: Pedagogical and Pragmatic Considerations for Afterschool Nutrition Education Programs

First Bite

Emphasis is often placed on ensuring content of NE curricula authentically represents the needs of the target audience. This qualitative study demonstrates that in addition to content alignment, content, engaging and meaningful delivery mechanisms are essential components. Findings were used to inform the development of the In-Field Nutrition curriculum.

Methods

12 in-depth interviews with teachers and afterschool program staff were conducted and analyzed using inductive content analysis. A purposive sample of 12 participants (4 teachers and 8 afterschool program coordinators) were interviewed. Interviewers, an average of 13.5 years of teaching experience, and program coordinators were selected from non-profit and public sectors with experience serving at-risk youth.

Results

Participants revealed 5 pedagogical elements related to enhancing an environment and 2 factors related to a curriculum’s viability in the afterschool setting.

Discussion

Determining content is often the primary focus when developing nutrition education curricula. However, this study reveals that delivery is also an important component.

Background

Afterschool settings are becoming increasingly more popular as venues for health promotion. Schools have identified a suitable environment to reach adolescents because they provide a safe and continuous context with the targeted population. However, with increasing competition for valuable classroom time, some researchers are beginning to explore the out-of-school space as a forum for health promotion programs with youth.

Abstract

Objective: Little information is available about planning effective nutrition education in afterschool programs. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of teachers and afterschool program coordinators on the positive aspects and challenges of afterschool nutrition education for middle school-aged children in order to guide the development of a nutrition education (NE) curriculum.

Study Design, Setting, Participants, Intervention: 60-minute semi-structured in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 4 teachers and 8 afterschool program coordinators were conducted. Teachers had an average of 13.5 years of teaching experience; and program coordinators were selected from non-profit and public sectors with experience serving at-risk youth.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using inductive content analysis to identify, count, and compare themes. Content analysis of themes was performed using QRS- NVivo.

Qualitative themes included: (1) pedagogical elements for successful learning with this age group, and (2) pragmatic considerations for hosting nutrition education programs in the afterschool context. These themes encompassed: (1) pedagogical elements and (2) pragmatic considerations.

Table 1. Pedagogical Elements to Successfully Delivering Curricula to Middle-School Aged Children in an Afterschool Setting.

Table 2. Pragmatic Considerations Related to the Context of Afterschool Education.

Table 3. Frequency of Themes by source

References


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