Team ‘Nutrition Rescue Force’ (TNRF): A Puppet Show to Promote Healthy Eating in Newcomer Children

Implementation

The youth developed two stories—“The Adventures of Cool Peas” and “Greeneville” which featured the key message of eating more dark green and orange vegetables and fruit. These were showcased on three separate occasions March 19th & 28th and April 1st 2013.

Evaluation

This pilot program included three main evaluation components:

1. Weekly Session Debriefs

The session debrief templates were completed by facilitators (Youth Worker and Dietetic Intern) after each of the three sessions. They included the documentation of activities that took place during the session, strengths and challenges of the sessions and areas that facilitators need to change and address for future sessions.

2. Post-Program Evaluation with Youth

The post-program evaluation with youth included: a) an adapted survey based on the validated Youth Experiences Survey (YES) 2.0 that included questions around basic skills and teamwork skills experienced during the program; b) a feedback form that included a questionnaire about how youth felt about teamwork and the puppet show performance; and c) a short debrief session with youth that asked youth open-ended questions about aspects of the program that worked well and areas that could be changed.

3. Children Facilitation Period

After each of the puppet shows, there was a brief facilitation period asking children questions about the nutrition messages of the puppet show. This was conducted in order to determine the children’s interest level in the performance and their understanding of its nutrition messages.

Findings

A brief summary of the main findings generated from the above three evaluation methods are discussed below:

1. Having an experienced youth worker who was able to motivate the youth, lead the sessions alongside the dietetic intern was beneficial. Including teamwork exercises such as the human knot and reflection wrap-up were helpful in reinforcing the message that youth will need to work together to successfully develop and perform a puppet show.

2. The skills that the majority of youth reported to have developed the most included artistic and creative skills (57%), communication skills (72%), nutrition knowledge (80%), learning how to compromise in a team (71%), sharing responsibility with others (72%), learning to be patient with other group members (72%), and improving how feedback is provided and received (72%). These results suggest that for the majority of youth teamwork skills were further developed. Youth responses to the feedback form questions were overwhelmingly positive. Several youth described that the teamwork experience from this program was “fun” and “exciting” because they had the opportunity to share different aspects of the program with different youth. The youth also expressed a great enjoyment from performing their puppet shows in front of young children, reporting that it provided an opportunity to educate children in an entertaining manner.

3. Overall the puppet shows were successful in engaging the children who were actively participating. The puppet shows helped reinforce the message that youth need to work together to successfully develop and perform a puppet show.}

Behind The Scenes

Meet The Cast

The Puppet Shows

Goal

The goal of this pilot program was two-fold: a) to develop nutrition-related puppet shows to generate awareness among young children (6-12 years old) about the importance of dark green and orange vegetables and fruit, and b) to provide positive teamwork and social skill development opportunities for older youth (16-18 years old) through the creation and delivery of the shows.

Background

Newcomer families, including refugees, who have low levels of income and English literacy, may be at an increased vulnerability to marketing of unhealthy foods in the Canadian media. This reality allows for the opportunity for children from newcomer families (who often are more fluent in English than their parents) to play a critical role in their parents’ food purchasing behaviour. In response, the Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Dietetic Interns at Access Alliance developed TNRF - a puppet show to promote healthy eating in newcomer and refugee children. Using the universally popular concept of “superheroes”, all TNRF characters are created by older youth with guidance from the Dietetic Interns and RDs. Victor Alexander Salvador, the original creator of TNRF is shown to the right (Behind The Scenes).

Why Puppets?

Social cognitive principles indicate that puppets can be used as educational tools to teach children about various topics by providing an opportunity to ‘learn through play’. This has occurred successfully in several public health interventions, related to HIV, first aid, hygiene, etc. Social cognitive principles indicate that puppets can be used as educational tools to teach children about various topics by providing an opportunity to ‘learn through play’. This has occurred successfully in several public health interventions, related to HIV, first aid, hygiene, etc.

Development

The pilot program provided three, 2-hour sessions to eight youth (16-18 years old) about the importance of dark green and orange vegetables and fruit using Canada’s Food Guide for Healthy Eating in Newcomer Children (TNRF): A Puppet Show to Promote Healthy Eating in Newcomer Children. You have the opportunity to implement this program in your community. For more information, or to read the full report please contact us at

Yousra Dabbouk, RD, MPH: ydabbouk@accessalliance.ca
Mariella Fortugno, MPH & Serena Nudel, BSW, DTATI: jatkins@accessalliance.ca
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

For more information, or to read the full report please contact us at