iCook 4-H Project: Collecting Impact Observed from Participants and Leaders about a Six-Session 5-State Program for Family Dyads

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iCook 4-H is a 5-state wide research project with the ultimate goal of preventing childhood obesity. Participants were 8-10 year old youth and their primary food preparer who participated in 6 classes that centered around cooking, physical activity, and family meal time. The iCook session leaders consisted of Extension employees, graduate, and undergraduate students.

Two separate surveys were administered; in 5 states for the leader survey (n=6) and 3 states for the participant survey (n=2).

Elicit feedback about the delivery of the iCook 4-H curriculum and how the themes translated into the home environment.

**Core Themes**

1. **Cooking Together**—children learned how to prepare a healthy recipe each class, and parents assisted in the cooking process.
2. **Playing Together**—both parents and children participated in physical activity.
3. **Eating Together**—all dyads sat down at each session and ate a family meal together.

**Objective**

- To collect highlights from program leaders and participants about comments overheard, observations, and feedback post 4-month and post-12 month of the iCook 4-H curriculum.
- To better understand the impact iCook 4-H curriculum had on learning outcomes for the children, and reactions the parents had during the 12 week, 6-session long classes.

**Methods**

**Participant Survey**

- **Response (n)**
  - Leader Survey: N=15
  - Participant Survey: N=20

- **Time Point**
  - Leader Survey: 4-month post intervention
  - Participant Survey: 12-month post intervention

**Objective**

- Designed to elicit feedback about what the leaders heard and observed from both the parents and youth.
- Designed to elicit feedback about impressions of the iCook 4-H curriculum.

**Format**

- Online and focus group format
- Paper format

**Results–Common Themes from Survey and Focus Groups**

Session leaders from all states reported similar highlights stating that parents were impressed with the cooking skills that their children were capable of and they tried many of the healthy recipes at home. The participant responses supported this data. All food preparers and youth reported that iCook 4-H had a positive effect on the time they spent cooking, eating, and playing as a family. Family mealtime posed challenges to most dyads and parents faced competition for family meal time from “technology.” They reported that both parents and children enjoyed the physical activities and talked about trying the activities at home.

**Common Responses from Session Leaders**

- “I heard comments like ‘we eat together more and we get to hear about each other’s days,’ And I’m learning more about my parents’ siblings.”
- “Some parents said they faced struggles with family meal time and getting their kids to put away electronics or not read at the dinner table.”
- “A little girl was so passionate about the iCook cooking classes that she asked her parents for cooking utensils for Christmas.”

**Common Responses from Participants**

Findings from this qualitative study add evidence that the iCook 4-H core themes were being transferred to the home environment. The leader responses to the questions showed that the iCook 4-H curriculum successfully taught children cooking skills, had children and parents actively participating in physical activity, and promoted the importance of family meal time. The leaders’ responses to the survey showed that parents gained confidence in their child’s ability to prepare recipes and be of help at home during the cooking process. The participant responses showed that iCook 4-H had a positive impact on their family time, and that they would recommend the class to others. There was also evidence that families faced challenges with having regular family meals focused on limited time and busy schedules. This lends support to the issue that confronting barriers to family mealtime may need to be addressed in the program as it is refined for dissemination.

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