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Discovering healthy eating habits

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Exploring food and discovering healthy habits

By Sunit Misra

Problem at hand

- Unsupervised hours after school puts children at risk
- 3 to 6 p.m. are the riskiest times for kids.
 - Juvenile crime rates soars.
 - Peak hours for involvement with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sex .
 - Lack of physical activity, contributing to adulthood obesity.
- Those not involved in an after school program are 49 percent more likely to use drugs and 37 percent more likely to become a teen parent.



Problem at hand

- A single event can drastically impact healthy development of a child.
- These devastating events can be prevented with supervised after school programs



Introducing...



In the Zone!

In the Zone

- In the Zone allows students a fun learning space after school.
- Participation from local groups such as WSWHE BOCES Enrichment Resource Services, and LEGO robotics.
 - Learning opportunities include math support, STEM, integration into the arts, health and wellness education
- My involvement with this program took the form of a monthly class focused on healthy eating and healthy bodies.

Identifying need

- I interviewed and met with several community members to learn more about need in the community. Specifically this includes:
 - Dr. Colleen Quinn M.D. – Community physician
 - Amy Langworthy – Warrensburg Elementary school principal
 - Amy Chambers – Warrensburg Elementary school teacher
- Meeting with these key players helped me identify where my skills would be most effectively be employed.

Goals for my project

- Help children start to understand their own palate and take a more active stance in food choices.
- To think about the food they are putting in their bodies, and how that will impact their future self.
- Positively approach unknown foods, and challenges.
- Increase interest in school or school activities, while keeping them away from dangerous influences.

Structure and focus of each class

- Classes were held after school once a month, focusing on a different healthy theme for each day.
- The focus of my class was on making choices. We thought about foods each person enjoyed, and what foods each person might like to try.
- A food station with options was arranged, with multiple items for students to try.
- Student actively created their own meals and reflected on their experience.

Sample menu

- Theme: Healthy breakfast!

Plain Greek yogurt



Honey Greek yogurt



Low fat strawberry yogurt



Blueberries



Mixed Berries



Plain Granola



Granola with dark chocolate



Granola glazed with honey



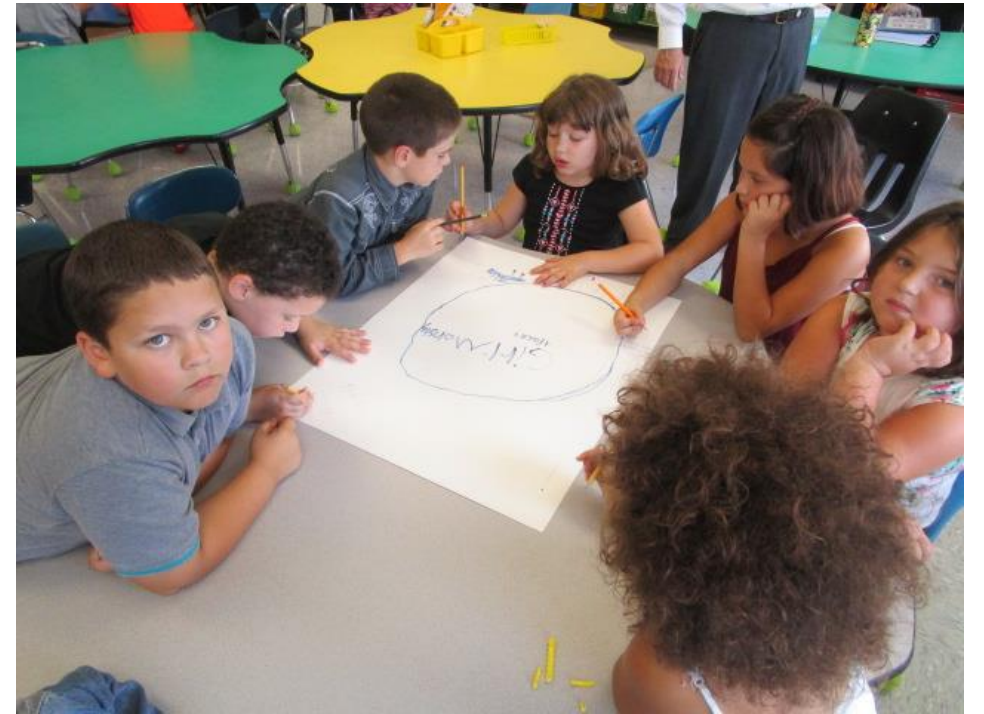
Comments

- “This is awesome!”
- “It looks like tie-die!” (when mixing fruit into Greek yogurt)
- “This tastes like cotton candy!”



Student feedback

- Around the room you will see a few posters where students were encouraged to reflect.
- Some of these were students thinking about and guessing what fruits were in their snacks.
- Other posters represent the most memorable snack they created. (Fruit Pizza seemed to be a popular choice)



Results

- Classes earlier in the year had around 30 students. As the year progressed participation grew to closer to 50 students.
- When 49 students were asked if they learned about a new healthy food they enjoyed:
 - 45 agreed they learned about a new healthy food
 - 4 did not think they learned about a new food

Limitations of my project

- The goal of my program was to build skills leading to healthy choices. I believe short term skills have been covered, but healthy eating and healthy choices tend to diminish unless constantly reinforced. Long term outcomes would be difficult to follow.
- My method of measuring healthy eating is subjective. Using objective measurements may provide more robust data and feedback for improvement.

Future improvements and sustainability

- Facilitate relationship with In the Zone for future LIC students.
- Work with teachers to identify areas that may benefit students
- Branch out to other community members to increase diversity of after school programs

Things that I learned

- I was always surprised by how receptive children were towards new foods.
- The importance of a fun environment around trying a new food. This can make or break a positive experience when exploring something new.
- Most kids want to be healthy!
Emphasizing healthy is cool, prepares them to develop good eating habits.



Questions?



Sources

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