

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:

Breakfast in the Classroom Enhancement Project: Classroom Mini-Farm Stands

Intervention Summary

The implementation of the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program in 2014 across all Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) schools brought a unique opportunity for youth to take advantage of the program and ensure its success and longevity. Recognizing the programs potential impact, the National Health Foundation (NHF), one of Los Angeles County Public Health Department's subcontracted agencies in the youth engagement category, partnered with Thomas Jefferson High School (TJHS) in South Los Angeles to implement a Health Academy program. The program, comprised of 38 Thomas Jefferson High School students, allows youth to participate in one of four research project teams. Youth in one particular pilot project, known as Legion of Health (LOH), identified the need to maximize the BIC program at their school by utilizing the surplus of fruit and/or non-perishable food items from their developed "Jeff's Mini Farm Stand" pilot project in order to drive healthy changes on campus and their school community.

Approximately 86 percent of Thomas Jefferson High School students are enrolled in the Free and Reduced Meal Program (FRMP) . Because of this high participation rate, all students at TJHS are eligible to receive breakfast and lunch at no cost, but information gathered from TJHS administrators revealed that only 45% of students participate in the National School Lunch Program, and less than 40% of students participated in the BIC program. A number of factors contribute to these low participation rates, including students' late arrival to school causing them to miss BIC, as well as students choosing to eat unhealthy food. The lack of healthy eating options is further exacerbated outside TJHS walls into the South Los Angeles area, where limited access to supermarkets with affordable, nutritious food creates a food desert and significant barriers to healthy eating that are too great for many individuals and families to overcome .According to Community Health Council's Food Desert to Food Oasis 2010 report, South Los Angeles is home to over 1.3 million people and the area's 60 full-service grocery stores serve approximately 22,156 residents each. In comparison, West LA's 57 grocery stores each serve 11,150 residents, approximately half the number of residents. In response to these factors, LOH chose to develop a campaign to increase student consumption of and access to free healthy snacks on campus.

Action steps to accomplishing success:

1. Youth were educated on issues related to nutrition and physical activity in their community.

An Adult Ally provided the team with information about the benefits of the following: eating breakfast, nutrition education basics, food systems that promote healthy food choices, public health interventions, and how the built environment can drive behavior.

- 2. Youth completed their community action research.** LOH surveyed over 150 peers to assess their purchasing and food consumption habits for unhealthy snacks, and their opinions on accessible healthy snacks on-campus. LOH also met with the Cafeteria Manager to gather more information about the BIC program participation rates and methods for improvement.
- 3. Youth developed Jeff's Classroom Mini-Farm Stand pilot project.** After completing the assessments, LOH identified access to low-cost healthy snacks as a barrier to healthy eating for many students. Youth proposed the best way to increase access to healthy snacks was to develop a project for inside the classroom. Youth envisioned the BIC program as a way to encourage consumption by recovering the food and offering it as a snack therefore reducing food waste and minimizing cost. Youth developed a pilot project to provide healthy snacks throughout the day at no cost to students by saving the surplus of fruit and/or non-perishable food items from the BIC program. Youth placed decorative baskets in classrooms and set uneaten food from BIC into the basket. LOH named their project "*Jeff's Mini-Farm Stand*" and designed baskets to hold the fruit in select classrooms.
- 4. Youth presented pilot project to TJHS administrators.** LOH met with the Cafeteria Manager and school administrators to present *Jeff's Classroom Mini-Farm Stand* pilot project. Youth were successful in getting their project approved.
- 5. Youth implemented pilot in select classrooms.** LOH partnered with several TJHS teachers to implement the pilot in select classrooms. Youth also developed a tracking system to record the number of students that grabbed a snack. LOH hypothesized, Students would consume all the items by the end of each school day.
- 6. Youth advocated for schoolwide implementation of pilot:** The project findings proved LOH's hypothesis to be correct, all food from the farm stand baskets were consumed by the end of each school day. LOH presented these findings to TJHS staff and advocated for schoolwide implementation. TJHS admin agreed to implement the project schoolwide in the upcoming school year.

The teachers recruited to assist with pilot implementation were vital in the success of the project. Teachers encouraged students to select a healthy snack from the farm stand basket when they were hungry and managed a tracking system within each classroom to capture data results. Key partners also included the TJHS Cafeteria Manager, who assisted youth with data gathering and was integral in helping draft a pilot plan as well as the TJHS Assistant Principal, who provided initial school support for the project and was helpful in advocating for schoolwide implementation for the 2015-2016 school year. The success of pilot project has garnered attention from key stakeholders such as the American Heart Association who expressed interest in bringing this to the attention of policy makers to expand the pilot to additional schools.

In the long term, the pilot project sought to increase the availability of healthy snacks and encourage the TJHS community to consume more healthy food through the LAUSD BIC program. Short term outcomes for the team included: securing support from the Cafeteria Manager to develop a project to enhance the BIC program, educating faculty and students on the benefits of eating breakfast, and implementing the project schoolwide. Long term outcomes include: sustaining the project at TJHS, increasing BIC participation rates at TJHS, seeking out partnerships to promote the pilot project, and working to present to the LAUSD schoolboard for districtwide implementation.

A Health Academy Adult Ally was invited to ENACT Day in Sacramento to speak to legislators about the youth-led BIC pilot project initiative. The presentation highlighted the work youth have spearheaded to bring healthy sustainable changes to their South Los Angeles community.

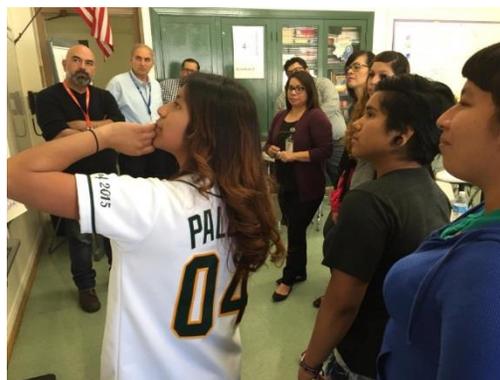
Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Barriers encountered included seeking approval from the principal to implement the pilot schoolwide proved to be an obstacle, as other challenges that the school was facing at the district level took priority. LOH determined the best route was to work with the Cafeteria Manager and Assistant Principal to decide on the type of food that can be recovered and plan the logistics of piloting the program in select classrooms.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

For sustainability, the project was designed to be incorporated into the daily classroom routine. Teachers' roles in the implementation of the project were kept at a minimum. Teachers' only on-going responsibilities are to fill the baskets with uneaten BIC food delivered from the cafeteria and replace the tracking sheets for reporting. Youth will be collaborating with the newly formed School Wellness Council and TJHS administration to develop a policy based off the pilot and adopt it into TJHS's wellness policies. The policy will allow youth to distribute the baskets to every classroom on the TJHS campus where students have access to healthy snacks throughout the day. In addition, youth will seek out partnerships with community organizations and schools to assist in promoting and implementing Jeff's Mini-Farm Stand in more schools and work to present the project to the LAUSD schoolboard to advocate for district-wide implementation.

The schoolwide implementation of the *Jeff's Mini-Farm Stand* project will increase availability and accessibility of free healthy snacks at TJHS. In addition, food waste is reduced by recovering any surplus of food from BIC and distributing it to students throughout the day. Part of the implementation for the upcoming year will be a nutrition education component where Healthy Academy youth will educate students who frequently miss BIC on the importance of eating breakfast. TJHS administration will conduct afterschool workshops with these students where Health Academy youth will educate the youth on breakfast and the *Jeff's Mini-Farm Stand* program.



¹ 'Free and Reduced Meal,' Analysis, Measurement, & Accountability Reporting Division. California Department of Education, 2013; <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/SNAP-Ed%20FFY%2015%20Att%201%20FRPM%202013%2005%2024.pdf>

² Bassford, N., Galloway-Gilliam, L., & Flynn, G. (2010, July 1). Food Desert to Food Oasis Promoting Grocery Store Development in South Los Angeles. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from http://www.chc-inc.org/downloads/Food_Desert_to_Oasis_07-12-2010.pdf

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