



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Engaging Ventura Unified School District Administration, Community Partners and After-School Program Staff in Creating and Implementing a District-Wide After-School Program Harvest of the Month Cooking Education Program: A Systems Change

Title

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Intervention Summary

For the past 10 years, the Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Department primarily focused on supporting the implementation of nutrition and cooking education into the regular school day. After-school programs did not receive the same type of nutrition education services due to grant funding limitations. Current Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention (NEOP) Program grant funds do not provide enough staffing to implement daily nutrition education classes. As a result, a larger systems change approach was needed in order to implement nutrition education in the after-school program setting.

Food and Nutrition Services NEOP funded staff contacted all key after-school program staff and partners to participate in a meeting to brainstorm ways to support after-school programs. Key partners included: Ventura USD Education Services ASES Program administrators, after-school program site directors, City of Ventura Community Services Department and the FNS Director. During the meeting, the group identified the specific nutrition education gaps, discussed funding limitations and funding opportunities. The key nutrition education gap in the after-school programs included regular healthful

cooking classes. The key funding limitation included the limited staff time under the Ventura USD NEOP subcontract. Key funding opportunities included the annual State ASES grant funds. A key opportunity included eager and willing after-school program staff who were willing to help implement the program and teach the cooking classes.

The following solutions were identified and implemented in order to implement a district-wide after-school program cooking class:

- VUSD NEOP staff provide training, technical assistance and resources for 10 after-school program sites.
- VUSD ASES grant funded food service staff time to teach weekly cooking classes alongside after-school program staff.
- VUSD FNS approved the recipes as a USDA reimbursable snack.
- VUSD ASES and the City of Ventura Community Services Division administration approved the weekly integration of the cooking classes into the after-school program schedule for each school year.
- VUSD ASES and the City of Ventura Community Services Division administration mandated that all after-school program staff annually participate in a Cooking with Kids training.
- Each of the 10 school sites conducted a weekly cooking class for 20 students during the entire school year as part of the USDA reimbursable snack program.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Four key partners and many staff were involved in the planning and implementation process. Challenges included: ensuring that all voices were heard during the planning process, determining and communicating staff role changes and fitting all the pieces together to create a highly functioning district-wide intervention.

Strategies utilized to address these challenges included: developing realistic timelines, conducting regular meetings with key partners and administrators, clearly identifying new roles and responsibilities during trainings and providing on-the-ground technical assistance.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

The short-term goal is to maintain regular communication with all key partners about program progress and interventions in order to maintain support.

The primary long-term goal is to train the VUSD After-School Curriculum Teacher Specialist to conduct the Cooking with Kids trainings and manage the after-school program cooking classes. When NEOP funding discontinues, the role will be taken over by district-funded staff to ensure its sustainability.

Contact information about this Narrative

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