NP1 Stage 2 Field Testing of a Family-Based Media Literacy and Nutrition Program to Prevent Childhood Obesity

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Objective: To continue field testing of a family-based curriculum and a youth-only version of the curriculum that uses a media literacy education approach to foster healthier family food behaviors.

Description: A second wave of field testing was completed for the family-based version of FoodMania: Kids & Food in a Marketing-Driven World. Two waves of a “youth-only” version of the curriculum using only the children’s lessons were also conducted. Each wave included corresponding control groups.

Evaluation: Family-based curriculum results showed significant increases in negative parental mediation and child-initiated discussion about food marketing and nutrition. Cognitive processing outcomes such as increased skepticism, critical thinking toward source and content, and advertising efficacy were also significant, among others. Parents in the family-based intervention reported a significantly better ratio of more-healthy to less-healthy foods in the home, higher social support from their children to purchase fruits, and more use of food labels. Children reported discussing nutrition label information with their parents significantly more often. Fewer significant outcomes were observed among children in the youth-only curriculum, as expected. Child-initiated discussion and critical thinking toward content remained significantly higher than the control groups. Children in either curriculum condition reported eating significantly more vegetables and/or fruit the previous day than their control group counterparts. Additional analyses will incorporate structural equation modeling to examine results within and between the family-based and youth-only curriculum conditions.

Conclusions and Implications: FoodMania successfully utilizes media literacy as a catalyst for family discussion about food and food marketing, and has positive cognitive and behavioral effects for parents and children. Delayed post-test analysis will examine longer-term curriculum impacts.

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NP2 Exploring Participant Engagement in a Supplementary Facebook Component to the FoodMania Curriculum

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Objective: To investigate the role of a supplementary social media component of a larger curriculum designed to foster family communication about food marketing and healthier food behaviors.

Description: A private, optional Facebook group was created for parent participants for each of the five county sites in Washington State testing the family-based curriculum FoodMania: Kids & Food in a Marketing-Driven World. A posting schedule that rotated by message strategy and topic was created and implemented by WSU researchers. Beyond these initial “administrator posts,” county educators and curriculum participants were encouraged to respond and share original content as well.

Evaluation: Data analysis is ongoing. Certain cognitive processing outcomes, nutrition outcomes, and family communication outcomes have thus far predicted overall participation in the Facebook group. These outcomes included critical thinking toward the source, wishful identification, advertising efficacy, social support for fruits and vegetables, utilizing nutrition facts labels, and positive and negative parental mediation. A participant’s inclination to contribute an original response on Facebook was associated with critical thinking toward sources of information and with using information on nutrition facts labels to select healthier foods. Participants were more engaged with posts related to nutrition-based facts and to food marketing when county educators and other participants shared targeted tips, activities, and recipes.

Conclusions and Implications: A targeted social media component paired with exiting curricula may reinforce concepts presented in the curriculum sessions. Those who are more engaged in the lessons may also be more engaged in the social media component. Educators who cultivate participation in the social media component by using it themselves will most effectively engage participants and foster involvement with each other.

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NP3 The HEROs Study Year 2: Engaging Families to Promote Healthy Eating And Activity Behaviors in Early Childhood

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Objective: The objective of the HEROs Study (HEalthy EnviRONments Study) is to develop a companion, technology-based, interactive family intervention to assess the potential amplification of The Food Friends programs to promote healthy lifestyles and weight outcomes for young children in both Head Start and family settings.

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