CURRICULUM


iCook 4-H is a program about cooking, eating, and playing together for 9- and 10-year-old youth and the adult who prepares their meals. It is designed for out-of-school settings with the goal of promoting healthful lifestyles. The 4-H approach to learn by doing is at the heart of iCook. It is presented in eight 2-hour sessions. Food preparation, physical activity, family engagement/communication, and goal-setting are part of each session, and families are encouraged to continue these activities at home between sessions.—National 4-H Council

In each session, participants make and eat a healthy recipe, engage in physical activity, and practice family communication. The leader’s guide for each workshop includes an overview of the day’s activities and objectives, the amount of time allotted for each activity, and thought-provoking discussion questions.

Busy community educators will appreciate the grocery and supply lists and instructions for activities in each session’s leader guide. Supplemental activity ideas and video demonstrations are accessible through the eXtension Moodle Campus. The appendix includes surveys for both youths and adults to be given before and after the program to measure impact.

A unique feature of the program is that it includes tips for using social media to enhance program effectiveness and integration with popular communication methods. Best practices are given, as well as considerations for etiquette, privacy, and protection of minors.

iCook 4-H is framed within Social Cognitive Theory and includes goal setting to provide opportunities to practice new behaviors, thereby improving self-efficacy and increasing the likelihood of lasting behavior change. Youth-adult pairs write specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-oriented, and reward goals aligned with the different focuses of the program and are given examples such as prepare x number of meals together in the next week.

Leaders will likely be familiar with the nutrition education handouts and recipes, which come from MyPlate. These dishes feature fruits and/or vegetables as central ingredients (e.g., Go Green Smoothie) and offer ways to add more nutrition to family favorites (e.g., Lentil and Cheese Quesadillas). To accommodate ingredient seasonality plus cultural, regional, and participant preferences, substitution recommendations are provided.

Leaders facilitate discussion about the ingredients used and guide participants in developing culinary skills during recipe preparation, helping them increase confidence in the kitchen. Communication activities, such as a meal planning game, further reinforce enjoyment of cooking and eating together as a family. Participants also complete a family meal journal between sessions to identify ways to improve the mealtime experience.

One of my favorite things about the curriculum is how physical activity is made fun with games. In 1 activity, participants place a beanbag on the tops of their feet and must shuffle their feet forward a little at a time so the bean bag does not fall off. Youth-adult dyads can compete against each other in teams, which adds to the incentive for moving quickly while enhancing teamwork and communication among family pairs. Other essentials for healthy exercise are covered as well, including safe stretching, warming up, and cooling down.

iCook 4-H is a research-based, well-organized framework for obesity prevention and healthy behavior change. It may be particularly effective because of its inclusion of adult caregivers and incorporation of hands-on activities, which increase self-confidence and foster an enjoyment of cooking and healthy eating that will last beyond the program’s end.

Leila Flure, MS, RD, LDN, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 905 S Goodwin Ave, 537 Bevier Hall, Urbana, IL 61801

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2019.01.015

Inclusion of any material in this section does not imply endorsement by the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior. Evaluative comments contained in the reviews reflect the views of the authors. Review abstracts are either prepared by the reviewer or extracted from the product literature. Prices quoted are those provided by the publishers at the time materials were submitted. They may not be current when the review is published. Reviewers receive a complimentary copy of the resource as part of the review process.

J Nutr Educ Behav. 2019;51:S69–S70

© 2019 The Authors. Published by Elsevier, Inc. on behalf of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior. This is an open access article under the CC BY license. (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

REFERENCES
