Local Indigenous Foods Training - Highlighting Native American Foodways

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Objective: Increase student knowledge of indigenous food ways across Nebraska through a culinary-based, nutrition education program.

Use of Theory or Research: The Local Indigenous Foods Training (LIFT) program is based on the Health Belief theoretical model focused on individual beliefs about health, which predict individual health-related behaviors, primarily the potential for positive benefits of action (perceived benefits) and confidence or ability to succeed (self-efficacy).

Description: The LIFT program targets rural Nebraska schools to engage in nutrition education and exploratory activities to increase student and staff knowledge of local foods and calls for closer attention to the origins of Nebraska native foods. The LIFT project is comprised of three components: 1) provides nutrition education for Nebraska food service staff, students, and farmers through the school setting on the benefits of local food utilization in school meals, 2) utilizes scratch recipes using local Nebraska products such as Apples, Aronia Berries, Beef, Bison, Dry Beans, Rhubarb, Turnips, Corn, and Squash, 3) engages students and staff through the recognition of Native foods, lands, and cultural practices that increase understanding of Native practices. The project engaged with tribal communities working to educate on Native foodways that teach Native youth about the importance of being stewards of the land, growing Native heirloom food, and providing intertribal and intergenerational opportunities for community members to teach, listen, and learn.

Evaluation: Participating school sites (n= 17) were engaged in the project over a nine-month period and completed three levels of evaluation by engaging youth to vote on project elements through 1) sensory evaluations, 2) lunchroom taste tests, and 3) process evaluations collected from food service and education staff. Recipes are adjusted per student feedback while continuing to meet National School Lunch Program nutritional standards.

Conclusions and Implications: Adapting a statewide intervention to a variety of school locations necessitates a flexible process to ensure effectiveness in sustainability. Data collected will produce ten local food-based recipes submitted through the Institute of Child Nutrition’s Child Nutrition Recipe Box.

Funding Year: 2020.

Pennsylvania Harvest of the Month Standardized Recipe Development: Results and Lessons Learned

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Objectives: Objectives of this project were to provide training for Child Nutrition Program (CNP) operators and State agency staff on the development of standardized recipes, engage students and school communities in development of recipes featuring Pennsylvania agricultural products, and provide nutrition education to students on agricultural products featured in recipes.

Description: Through funding from a Fiscal Year 2021 Team Nutrition Training Grant, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Food and Nutrition, and Penn State University implemented this project to provide training on standardized recipe development and develop recipes featuring selected Pennsylvania Harvest of the Month (PA HOM) items - asparagus, beets, cabbage, mushrooms, and winter squash. An online module, “U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Recipe Standardization Process,” was developed to provide training for CNP operators and State Agency staff. This module is housed on the School Nutrition Toolbox site (www.schoolnutritiontoolbox.org). Through a competitive application process, 8 local education agencies (LEAs) were selected to work with the project team and a chef to develop recipes. Each LEA was assigned one PA HOM item and tasked with engaging students in recipe development. For the purposes of this project, in order to submit recipes to USDA to be included on the Child Nutrition Recipe Box site, recipes had to meet specific nutrient standards and a student approval threshold of 85%. LEA representatives participated in a culinary training session to learn how to prepare the recipes and provide feedback.

Evaluation: More than 100 individuals successfully completed the online module. Fifteen LEA representatives participated in the culinary training session. An evaluation revealed that participants felt that participation in this project improved their knowledge of the recipe standardization process, taste-testing strategies, and strategies to gather student input about new recipes. Eleven recipes met the USDA nutrient standards and student approval threshold.

Conclusion and Implications: Student acceptance of recipes featuring vegetables that were somewhat unfamiliar to most students can be achieved by engaging students in the development process and strategic taste-testing techniques. Lessons learned will be shared.

Funding Year: 2021. This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.