### Teachers “Eating Smart & Moving More”: Development of a Program Assistant Guide for the Head Start Audience

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**INTRODUCTION**

- More than 20% of all preschool-age children in the United States are overweight or obese and low-income children are disproportionately affected.
- Approximately 1/3 of children entering Head Start are classified as overweight or obese.
- Since overweight/obesity risk factors are more easily modified in early childhood and low-income children are most vulnerable, the Head Start environment is a prime location for obesity-prevention related intervention programs.
- Evidence also suggests that nutrition/physical education in the classroom can improve children’s eating habits and long-term weight status, making teachers important partners in efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles.
- However, Head Start teachers may not be prepared to serve as positive role models for children due to their own limited knowledge of healthy eating and physical activity.
- Effective teacher education in nutrition and physical activity can increase teacher confidence, awareness, and ability. This will allow teachers to improve their own lifestyle, and ultimately empower teachers to serve as agents of change in their classrooms and local communities, aiding in the prevention of overweight/obesity.

This at time, evidence-based professional development targeting food nutrition and physical education for Head Start teachers is not available in Eastern NC (ENC).

**PURPOSE**

- The purpose of this project was to develop an evidence-based teaching guide for Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) regional Program Assistants (PAs) to teach Head Start teachers in ENC (Table 1).
- PAs delivered the 6-lesson nutrition education and physical activity series to Head Start teachers in Bertie and Lenoir Counties to provide a context to the guidance on developing programs and policies.
- Participating teachers received incentives in the form of $100.00 gift cards to local restaurants.
- After implementation, participating EFNEP PAs and Head Start teachers provided feedback in the form of pre and post-train and conference interviews on how to best implement the program in the Head Start environment.
- Teacher journals documented teacher reflections post-lesson and included insight on content, delivery process, personal and professional development as a result of each lesson (Table 2), and asked for strategies to apply lessons learned into nutrition messages for Head Start.
- Each of the two participating PAs in Bertie and Lenoir County and their district supervisor (n=3) were interviewed providing feedback on barriers, facilitators, and motivators for implementing the program in the Head Start setting.
- All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.
- Qualitative data was reviewed and emergent themes identified. Themes were used to informed final revision of the PA guide.
- This study was approved by the ECU IRB (UMCIRB 16-001996).

### METHODS

- Six lessons from the existing EFNEP curriculum, Families Eating Smart & Moving More, were selected for PAs to teach Head Start teachers in ENC (Table 1).
- PAs delivered the 6-lesson nutrition education and physical activity series to Head Start teachers in Bertie and Lenoir Counties to provide a context to the guidance on developing programs and policies.
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### RESULTS

#### Table 2. Themes identified across journal entries from Head Start teachers in Teachers Eating Smart and Moving More (n=22).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Title</th>
<th>Lesson Objectives</th>
<th>Key Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fix It Safe</td>
<td>1. Identifying food safety hazards in your community</td>
<td>1. Check labels and ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Checking for nutrition facts, ingredients, and portion sizes</td>
<td>2. Use labels for smart portion models and healthy choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop the Best for Less</td>
<td>1. Creating a shopping list</td>
<td>1. Always shop with a list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Saving money on FV</td>
<td>2. Use coupons to get the most for your money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop for Value - Check the Facts</td>
<td>1. Creating a favorite meal list</td>
<td>1. Save time/money by planning meals ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Making meals ahead</td>
<td>2. Use leftovers wisely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing More Fruits &amp; Vegetables</td>
<td>1. Including a variety of fruits and vegetables (FV) in your diet</td>
<td>1. Eat FV at most meals/snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Saving money on FV</td>
<td>2. Eat variety of colors each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing to Move More Throughout the Day</td>
<td>1. Choosing to move more</td>
<td>1. Make half your plate FV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Incorporating PA each day</td>
<td>2. Increase daily physical activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Lesson Objectives:**
  - Identify food safety hazards in your community
  - Checking for nutrition facts, ingredients, and portion sizes
  - Creating a shopping list
  - Saving money on FV
  - Making meals ahead
  - Including a variety of fruits and vegetables (FV) in your diet
  - Saving money on FV
  - Choosing to move more
  - Incorporating PA each day

- **Key Messages:**
  - Check labels and ingredients
  - Use labels for smart portion models and healthy choices
  - Always shop with a list
  - Use coupons to get the most for your money
  - Save time/money by planning meals ahead
  - Eat FV at most meals/snacks
  - Eat variety of colors each day
  - Make half your plate FV
  - Increase daily physical activity

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**REFERENCE**


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