The Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative is a program of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania that engages, educates and empowers youth, university students, and community members to promote healthy lifestyles and build a just and sustainable food system. The Growing Together Youth Empowerment Program addresses some of the major issues that adversely affect adolescent health and achievement in West Philadelphia. According to the School District of Philadelphia latest District Scorecard (SY 2015-2016), the Four Year Cohort Graduation rate was 69%, the first college matriculation rate was 51% and 13% of 10th grade students achieved college readiness benchmarks on the SAT or ACT. 40% of students attended school fewer than 80% of the time. In 2016, 27.2% of residents are in poverty or fair health, and have 4th grade literacy rates of 17.3% compared to the 13.0% across the US as a whole. The adult obesity rate in Philadelphia is 32%. Adult hypertension and diabetes is more common in Philadelphia than in any other of the 10 largest countries in the US. Teens in Philadelphia also have challenges such as teen pregnancy, violence, and high rates of child mortality. Many of these issues disproportionately affect non-Hispanic black children, teens, and adults.

As part of the Growing Together Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), students from William L. Sayre and Paul Robeson High Schools participated in group nutrition education 15 hours per week in the after school program. As part of the Growing Together Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), students from William L. Sayre and Paul Robeson High Schools participated in group nutrition education 15 hours per week in the after school program. As part of the Growing Together Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), students from William L. Sayre and Paul Robeson High Schools participated in group nutrition education 15 hours per week in the after school program. The Youth Empowerment Program seeks to address unhealthy behaviors in at-risk minority youth 10-18 years of age. YEP approaches the goal of providing students with opportunities to learn and work while improving nutrition education and physical activity opportunities within the context of a structured curriculum. The goals are to improve education and empowerment around nutrition and food justice while also improving school outcomes in participating students. Both of these School District of Philadelphia schools are in communities that experience high rates of poverty, violence, and chronic disease. Measures of high school success markers were compared in students who were involved in YEP to the school averages.

GPA: GPA comparison data was only available at Robeson with YEP students averaging 2.36 and all students averaging 2.25.

Average Days absent: YEP Sayre students were present 86% of days this compares to Sayre’s average attendance rate of 91%.

Average Days Tardy: YEP Sayre students were tardy 23.2% of days which compares to Sayre’s average tardy rate of 25.2%.

Average Number of Days Missed School: YEP Robeson students were absent 2.35 days compared to an average of 2.87 days absent for the Robeson student population as a whole.

Average Number of Days Tardy: YEP Robeson students were tardy 3.8 days compared to an average of 4.07 days tardy for the Robeson student population as a whole.

Average Percent of Days Tardy: YEP Robeson Students has 19.6%, whereas the Four Year Cohort Graduation rate was 69%.

Average Percentage of School Days: YEP Robeson Students has 86.0%, whereas the Four Year Cohort Graduation rate was 69%.

Comparisons were made between 41 students engaged in the Growing Together YEP program to school averages for William L. Sayre High School and Paul Robeson High School for Human Services. Both schools are within the Philadelphia School District. Schools collect data differently. Measures of high school success markers: GPA, Days absent, Days tardy, and GPA.

Days Absent: On average, YEP students were present 86% of days compared to an average attendance rate of 91%. Days Tardy: On average, YEP students were tardy 23.2% of days compared to an average tardy rate of 25.2%. Days of School Missed: YEP Robeson students were absent 2.35 days compared to an average of 2.87 days absent for the Robeson student population as a whole.

The Urban Nutrition Initiative had positive impact on high school success markers, most markedly as it contributes to school attendance. While not always directly correlated, attending school can assist with grades, standardized test scores, and positive adult relationships.

Nutrition education is often ancillary to high school curricula. This study demonstrates that nutrition education can have broader impacts when compared to students not in the program, particularly around the development of 21st Century Skills. This has implications for developing programs aimed at improving outcomes for high school students in under resourced urban areas. Nutrition education programs can have a lasting impact on students’ lives not only by building specific skills but also by increasing school engagement overall. Further studies on a larger scale would be beneficial. Additionally, studies regarding the most effective curriculums not only by building specific skills but also by increasing school engagement overall. Further studies on a larger scale would be beneficial. Additionally, studies regarding the most effective curriculums will help shape programs.

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References and Acknowledgements

4. Katera Moore, PhD, MES; Melissa Sattler, MSPH, RD

Implications for Future Programming

Broader Implications of Nutrition Education on High School Success Markers

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