

Flint Kids Cook: Feasibility and Preliminary Effectiveness of a Cooking and Nutrition Education Program for Children

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INTRODUCTION

Programs that include cooking may be more effective in improving diet quality among children than nutrition education alone.¹ Flint Kids Cook was created in October 2017 as a pilot cooking and nutrition program for children in Flint, Michigan. Unique in design, the program was co-facilitated by a chef and dietitian and offered inside a farmers' market commercial kitchen. The current study assessed feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of Flint Kids Cook.

METHODS

This pre-post pilot study included six weekly sessions (90 minutes each) at a local farmers' market. Children were recruited from partnering pediatric offices and community-based organizations in Flint. Sessions included 10-12 children (8-18 years) who actively prepared two dishes that highlighted a specific food group. The final session was a celebratory meal that children prepared for their families. Feasibility was assessed using retention rates. To evaluate effectiveness, baseline and exit scores related to attitude towards cooking and cooking self-efficacy were compared using paired samples t-tests. Attitude towards cooking scores ranged from 6-30 (lower scores indicated a more positive cooking attitude) and cooking self efficacy from 8-40 (lower scores reflected greater cooking self efficacy).²



Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Participants (n=71)
Female, n (%)	36 (51)
Male, n (%)	35 (49)
African American, n (%)	61 (86)
Caucasian, n (%)	10 (14)
Age in years Mean ± SD (range)	10.8 ± 2.3 (8-18)
Four or more sessions, n (%)	52 (73)
Three or less sessions, n (%)	19 (27)
Flint Residents, n (%)	55 (77)
Non-Flint Resident, n (%)	16 (23)

Table 2. Perception of Cooking Skills and Cooking Attitudes

	Baseline Mean ± SD (n=51)	Exit Mean ± SD (n=51)	p-value
Attitude towards cooking	8.75 ± 2.89	7.87 ± 2.46	0.001
Cooking self-efficacy	13.75 ± 4.50	11.53 ± 3.88	0.002

RESULTS

Of the 71 children who attended the program, (73%) completed at least 4 sessions. Most participants (mean age 10.8 ± 2.3 years) were African American (86%) and Flint residents (77%). Approximately half were female (51%). Among the 51 children who completed baseline and exit assessments, significant improvements ($p=0.001$) were observed in mean attitude towards cooking scores from baseline (8.75 ± 2.89) to program exit (7.87 ± 2.46). Mean cooking self-efficacy scores also improved significantly ($p=0.002$) from baseline (13.75 ± 4.50) to program exit (11.53 ± 3.88).

CONCLUSIONS

Flint Kids Cook could be modeled in similar communities to engage children and promote positive changes in cooking attitudes and self efficacy.

REFERENCES

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