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# Teacher enthusiasm and implementation of Harvest for Healthy Kids curriculum activities: Descriptive preliminary data

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## Abstract

Harvest for Healthy Kids is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project between Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) Head Start and Dr. Betty Izumi at the School of Community Health, Portland State University. Modeled after the “farm-to-school” concept, Harvest for Healthy Kids is a nutrition intervention designed to introduce children in early care and education settings to a wide variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables through their meals, snacks, and classroom activities. This year (2012-2013), research assistants conducted weekly check-in phone calls to evaluate the fidelity of the Harvest for Healthy Kids curriculum by ten MHCC Head Start teachers involved in the intervention. Teachers were asked what activities were completed, if they liked them and if they will use them in the future. Teachers were also asked to rank their personal enthusiasm level regarding implementation of the curriculum. Descriptions, adaptations and opinions of activities were noted. Data collection is ongoing through the end of the school year. Analysis of teacher check-in phone call findings will enrich the implementation of activities, address teachers experienced barriers, and show the significance and fidelity of the Harvest for Healthy Kids curriculum. Research findings will be used to adapt Harvest for Healthy Kids activities, and will assist in the development of future teacher training's and expand the curriculum's use in other early childhood education settings.

## Methods

- Teachers (n=10) are called weekly
- Teachers are asked:
  - Did you do activity x?
  - Did you like activity x?
  - Will you use activity x in the future?
- Teachers are asked to rank their enthusiasm level on a scale from 1 -10; 10 meaning very enthusiastic.
  - Qualitative data is collected regarding classroom environment, activity adaptations and suggestions, and challenges to activity implementation. Teacher sickness and/or absence is also noted.



## Descriptive Preliminary Data

**Featured Produce: Carrots, Winter Squash, Cabbage, Sweet Potatoes & Potatoes, Winter Root Vegetables, Berries and Cabbage**

*Summary of Harvest for Health Kids activity implementation rate and average self reported enthusiasm per teacher. \**

	Rate of Activity Implementation	Average Self-reported Enthusiasm Level
T1	78%	9.22
T2	42%	8.29
T3	69%	9.38
T4	63%	8.04
T5	58%	6.29
T6	64%	8.43
T7	38%	6.38
T8	65%	8.83
T9	42%	5.08
T10* (4 months in the program)	44%	7.77
T11* (2 months in the program)	27%	7.5

\*Teacher 10 left for maternity leave 4 months into the implementation of the Harvest for Healthy Kids Program. Teacher 11 has been implementing the program for 2 months.

## Harvest for Healthy Kids Activities

*Table Talk:* Mealtime Conversation

*Picture Cards:* Associated with the featured produce of the month.

*Transition Activities:* Use the featured produce to transition children from one activity to the next, or to mealtime.

*Hand Stamps/Stickers:* Used to encourage and reward children for trying the featured item. “I like that you tried something new and different. Let me give you a stamp.”

*Read Aloud Book:* Pre-selected book that focuses on the featured produce is read during circle time or in small groups.

*Tasting the Featured Produce:* Featured produce is tasted during meal time or during a separate tasting activity.

*Sticker Chart:* Children who taste the featured produce is charted or graphed.

*Art Activity:* Art that correlates to the featured produce.

*Cooking Activity:* Harvest for Healthy Kids recipe with the featured produce.

*Recipe Book:* Children decorate the Harvest for Healthy Kids Recipe of the month to create a book to take home at the end of the year.

*Planting Activity:* Using the featured produce in actual or pretend planting.

*Sensory/Discovery Activity:* Having the featured produce available in the sensory or discovery area for the children to see, feel, smell, observe.



## Discussion



Overall, teacher responses to check-in phone calls have been positive. Teachers provide positive feedback, as well as potential adaptations to the curriculum, including suggestions about activities, books, and recipes. The data is still preliminary, and will be fully analyzed at the conclusion of the school year.

### Potential Limitations:

- Teachers have reported that children's behavior in the classroom often determines what and how many activities they are able to accomplish.
- Teachers are responsible for other Head Start requirements such as home visits and observations. Many have noted that these requirements can limit Harvest for Healthy Kids activities due to time and energy constraints.
- Classrooms vary by children's age, developmental, language, and behavioral level.
- One teacher left mid year for maternity leave and was not replaced by a permanent substitute teacher until a month later.
- Absences and sickness of teachers can affect implementation of activities and overall enthusiasm level.
- Availability of resources: fresh produce, cooking equipment and art supplies may limit activity implementation.
- Teachers also noted limited knowledge or exposure to certain featured produce which may limit their enthusiasm and/or activity implementation.
- Teachers may have forgotten certain activities that were completed, due to lag time between calls and implementation.

### Future Suggestions:

- Use an online reporting/survey system to collect responses
- Conduct monthly classroom observations

References available on request.