Kid's Choice Program

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program is for children who are in 1st through 4th grade.

SUMMARY

Kid’s Choice Program, a school-based program, is designed to improve students’ well-being and uses positive rewards to encourage children to engage in healthy behaviors, such as eating fruits and vegetables; drinking low-fat, low-sugar healthy beverages; and exercising.

EVIDENCE

A pre-test post-test study was first conducted to evaluate the program’s effectiveness at increasing children's fruit and vegetable intake and their preferences for fruits and vegetables. After 1 month, this study found that children who were rewarded for eating fruits and vegetables significantly increased their fruit and vegetable consumption. Two weeks after the program ended, children reported significant increases in their preferences for fruits and vegetables; however, these preferences were not sustained when re-examined 7 months after program completion. Since the original study, the program has been expanded to include rewarding children's consumption of low-fat, low-sugar, healthy drinks and for exercising daily (i.e., walking 5,000 steps). Children were randomized to either receive the Kid's Choice Program or a control condition. After 3 months, both groups had significant increases in consuming fruits and vegetables; choosing low-fat, low-sugar, healthy drinks; and increasing their number of daily steps. The Kid's Choice group experienced greater increases across these three outcomes when compared to the control group. Overweight (i.e., above the 85th percentile for body mass index [BMI]) and average weight children in both groups experienced significant reductions in their BMI percent scores immediately after program completion; however, the reductions in BMI percent were not observed 6 months after program completion.

COMPONENTS

This program intends to improve participants general health and consists of three steps:

1. Children wear name tags during lunch and recess;
2. Children's name tags are punched with a star when they have done one of the following: eaten 1/8 cup of fruits or vegetables first during their meal, chosen a low-fat and low-sugar healthy drink (e.g., low-fat milk), or recorded 5,000 steps on their pedometer; and
3. Children trade their nametags in for small prizes when they have accumulated enough stars.

In order to determine if children have complied with the program requirements, the following items are considered:

- Program facilitators observe children's lunches 3 days a week and check for suitable food choices and
- Children wear pedometers during the week and turn their pedometers in to their classroom’s weekly collection box, and the number of steps are recorded.

Children receive one star-shaped hole punched into their name tag for each of the three behaviors they complete daily. Parents can report children's fruit, vegetable, and beverage consumption at five dinner meals at home and return their parent record to earn extra stars for their children. Once children earn 10 stars, they can choose small prizes, such as pens, notebooks, modeling clay, puzzles, stickers, water bottles, stuffed animals, and jump ropes. Children are given new name tags each week and leftover stars from the week before can be put towards the next week's tally.

PREVIOUS USE

No previous use information beyond the two evaluation studies was located.
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TRAINING

Observations of children's behavior are conducted by the program facilitators. These individuals are required to complete 1 month of observer training during which they also complete inter-observer reliability trials. For additional details, please contact the developer using the information in the Contact section.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for implementing this program include acquiring buy-in from schools, understanding there are costs associated with the program, recognizing there may be challenges associated with having young children wear pedometers, finding individuals to observe children during lunch time, and ensuring the observers receive the training.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION

If you are interested in implementing Kid's Choice Program, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

The program lasts 3 months.
Implementation materials cost $7 per child for each month of the program.

EVALUATION PLAN

To move Kid's Choice Program to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one evaluation should be performed demonstrating positive effects lasting at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Helen Hendy by mail Psychology Program, Penn State University, Schuylkill Campus, 200 University Drive, Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972 or email hl4@psu.edu

SOURCE

Hendy, Williams, and Camise (2005) and Hendy, Williams, and Camise (2011).