Texas Grow! Eat! Go!
Using Family Focused Garden, Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs to Reduce Childhood Obesity

ISSUE

OBESITY AFFECTS MANY TEXAS CHILDREN: in 5 Texas sites, a sampling of 3rd grade students revealed that 45% - 54% of students were overweight or obese.

RISK FACTOR OF OBESITY INCLUDE: poorer school attendance, increased risk of being bullied, and developing Type 2 Diabetes during childhood.

SCHOOLS CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN’S KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIORS RELATED TO OBESITY.

1. Vegetable exposure plus school gardening has been shown to improve consumption of fruits and vegetables.
2. Adding more frequent and more vigorous physical activities during school has been shown to improve student fitness and weight.

APPROACH

Evaluate the effects of two best practice Extension programs (Junior Master Gardener-Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! - JMG-LGEG and Walk Across Texas – WAT) combined with Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) to determine improvement in eating behaviors and physical activity using a randomized control trial with 1325 3rd grade students and 1136 parents at 28 schools.

FEATURES

JMG-LGEG
- 14 weeks of teacher led classroom lessons aligned with TEKS and STAAR standards
- Fall and Spring school gardens featuring 12 vegetables
- Student garden journals
- 12 fresh vegetable tastings in class
- 12 easy vegetable recipe demonstrations in class
- 12 easy vegetable recipes to take home (English/Spanish)
- 14 Family stories aligned with TEKS (English & Spanish)
- Family and volunteer engagement opportunities

WAT
- 16 week physical activity challenge among classrooms (8 weeks each semester)
- Family bonus miles
- Walking bingo
- Family newsletters (English/Spanish)
- Family and volunteer engagement opportunities
Extension’s combined LGEG+WAT combined with CATCH showed significant behavioral improvement:

- Student vegetable preference increased
- Student vegetable consumption at school increased
- Student knowledge in nutrition and plant science increased
- Student engagement in moderate physical activity increased
- Sugar sweetened beverage consumption decreased
- Home availability of sugar sweetened beverages decreased
- Parents and students gardening together increased
- Parents and students preparing meals together increased
- Parents and students eating meals together increased

*Using a randomized control study with pre-post and follow-up surveys with children, parents, teachers, and volunteers.

GROW SMART & HEALTHY KIDS!

Research collaborators included University of Texas School of Public Health – Austin Regional Campus, Texas A&M School of Public Health, Texas A&M Recreation, Parks & Tourism Science & Health and Kinesiology Departments and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Horticulture, Family Development and Nutrition Departments.

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