

## Healthy Kids Challenge® – Balance My Day™ Practice-Based

Evidence-based Interventions have been described as research-tested, practice-based, or emerging interventions. (SNAP-Ed Strategies and Interventions, 2014)

As with many programs and resources, Balance My Day is practice tested. Healthy Kids Challenge continuously monitors the effectiveness of the interventions and conducts literature reviews of feasible and reliable research method. Over years of experience, however, many of the same challenges noted by Levine, et.al. (*Evaluating MyPlate: An Expanded Framework Using Traditional and Nontraditional Metrics for Assessing Health Communication Campaigns JNEB Vol. 44, No. 4, 2012*) and in Lessons Learned SNAP Education and Evaluation Wave II Case Study Report – Iowa BASICS ([http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNAPEDWaveII\\_IowaVol1.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNAPEDWaveII_IowaVol1.pdf)) have been demonstrated. These are changes in classroom personnel, challenges related to evaluating children, minimal control over evaluation activities in the classroom, and limited control over data entry, which call into question the feasibility and reliability of rigorous research testing.

There may be a question in some minds as to whether Balance My Day can be as effective as similar research-tested interventions. It is important to recognize that Balance My Day incorporates recommended best practices such as MyPlate not found in other similar interventions. Interventions such as CATCH and Eat Well and Keep Moving were research-tested a number of years ago, leaving a question about whether or not current research would reflect the same level of effectiveness.

Balance My Day has been rigorously reviewed and approved by Texas Education Agency, Illinois NET (Nutrition Education Training), the Los Angeles Unified School District, and Indiana TEAM Nutrition. It has been assessed using the Healthy Out-of-School Time Framework. The curriculum, *Balance My Day*, aligns with both the recommendations set forth by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' GENIE tool (A Guide for Effective Nutrition Interventions and Education) and the Centers for Disease and Prevention Health Education Analysis Tool – Healthy Eating (HECAT-HE). Note: Healthy Kids Challenge is on the advisory board of HECAT-HE.

In addition, the Balance My Day curriculum provides a systematic evaluation process that uses objective data to learn about the strengths and weaknesses. Balance My Day curriculum and training is a comprehensive approach that includes environmental, practice, knowledge, attitude, and behavior change. Evaluation includes

- **A pre-post assessment tool:** The assessment is available for use with each of the curriculum grade ranges, K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. It is provided to teachers for the purpose of identifying base line cognitive understanding, attitudes, and behaviors prior to the introduction of the curriculum as well as measurement of shifts in attitude, practice and knowledge post curriculum implementation. This tool includes all the HECAT standards and provides a means

of assessing student understanding, behavior and attitudes related to: food safety concepts, and healthy eating behaviors associated with breakfast, portion sizes, healthy snacking, beverage choices, fruit and vegetable intake, whole grains, and MyPlate meal patterns, plus skills with media and other influencers, how to access valid nutrition information, communicating personal choice and decision making, and goal setting.

- **Worksheets:** Each of the 30 Balance My Day nutrition curriculum lessons (K-2, 3-5, or 6-8) has a student worksheet to assess understanding of the nutrition concepts presented in that lesson. The assessments measure knowledge, positive attitudes towards healthy food choices, and provide goal setting for healthy eating.
- **Healthy Habit Checklist:** At the end of each section of ten lessons, a healthy habit checklist, recommended by HECAT, offers the student an opportunity to self-assess his understanding of concepts and progress in achieving healthy behavior goals. The teacher may also use this checklist for assessment verification and discussion with the student. Students can also take home the checklist to talk about what they have learned.

It is important to note that Healthy Kids Challenge intervention strategies and training have been practiced over multiple populations and venues; in schools, after school programs, and community neighborhood centers and recreation facilitations.

Anecdotally, at least part of the success in increasing practices that support and educate healthy behaviors is attributed to the flexibility with implementing curriculum that addresses the time constraint challenges experienced in all schools and youth programs.

Data for environment and practice change: Environmental and practice change is demonstrated by success after HKC intervention in a Florida 20 school district, following 1 training and 1 year of coaching. Using an assessment based on school health index indicators (Call to Action\*); on an average the Florida schools scored 72.5 out of 100 points on the pre-assessment and 83 out of 100 on the post-assessment, an improvement of 8%.

- 64% of the schools started or enhanced (or expanded) a wellness teams
- 57% started or expanded a staff wellness plan
- 86% started or expanded staff participation in wellness actions
- 71% started or expanded healthy eating options (classroom, vending, school store, etc.)
- 64% added minutes of physical activity to the day
- 64% started or expanded school food service actions (i.e., marketing to increase participation)
- 86% started or increased nutrition education

In Richmond, Virginia 3 schools actively participated in distance assistance; after 1 year of coaching Nokesville Elementary School, VA classrooms are getting more physical activity and



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learning more about nutrition. Using an assessment based on school health index indicators; on an average the 3 Richmond schools scored 33 out of 100 points on the pre-assessment and 69 out of 100 on the post-assessment, an improvement of 48%!

- 100% of classroom teachers integrated nutrition into the core curriculum
- 100% of classroom teachers added 5-15 minutes of physical activity per day. That adds up to 25-75 extra minutes of physical activity each week!
- Over 32% of teachers increased their own steps goals by walking before school each day.

### Content data

Outcomes are based on knowledge, attitude and self-reported behavior. The results depend on how schools choose to implement the curriculum.

A Charles City, VA school chose to focus their data collection on practices, attitudes and behaviors related to increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity. The school conducted a pre and post assessment survey resulting in the following:

- At the beginning of the school year students were neutral to hesitant about having fruits and vegetables for snacks during the school day. At the end of the year 95-100% of students were excited about receiving them at snack times.
- Following intervention, students continued to demonstrate more positive attitudes about trying the unfamiliar fruits and vegetables. When asked to name a variety of snacks, students name fruits and vegetables primarily.
- Parents reported to school staff that their children were trying more fruits and vegetables at home.
- School food service used the data to identify preferences and find alternate ways of serving the fruits and vegetables that did not receive high preference ratings.
- 9 of 13 teachers interviewed reported at least a 50% increase in the amount of healthy food sent in response to healthy suggestions; 4 of the 9 reported a 70% improvement.

### Data related to Student – Family Interactions

Surveys [pre-(n=96) and post-(n=79)] indicated positive trends with student-family interactions:

- 62.5% -pre-survey compared to 70.9%-post survey of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders said that in the last week they had asked a family member to be physically active or do a sport with them.

- 62.5%-pre-survey compared to 72% post-survey of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders said that in the last week they had asked a family member to prepare a fruit or vegetable for a meal.