

Vulnerable Groups and their Nutritional Needs

Transitioning tradition: the potential for online culinary workshops for children aged 9-11 years old

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Purpose: The objective of this pilot project was to determine whether an online culinary workshop for children aged 9-11 years old would be feasible and effective at meeting specific goals related to enhancing nutrition knowledge, food skills, attitudes and behaviors, food choices, and food security. The project was run through a Montréal-based food bank which hosted in-person educational culinary workshops for kids, called *Boîte à Lunch*, prior to COVID-19.

Summary: A total of 18 families recruited from a community day camp in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, QC participated in 1-3 workshops. Free meal kits, containing all necessary ingredients and missing equipment, were prepared and distributed. Participants joined the facilitation team via Zoom™ for the workshops.

Systematic approach: The program was carefully planned before implementation, taking into consideration factors such as ability, support and accessibility. Ensuring that families had the equipment necessary to cook (pans, tools, etc.) and connect virtually (computer/phone, reliable internet access, etc.) as well as the capacity to use the platform was important. Support from the facilitation team was available to help if necessary. Pre- and post-surveys were administered to parents, and children were asked questions during sessions either verbally or with polls.

Conclusions: Overall the 90-minute workshops were successful and enjoyable, as assessed by participant retention and a rating of 4.5/5 (90%) for enjoyability in the post-survey. Positive directions of change were noted for parental perceptions of their child's cooking skills (+41.6% for basic abilities), attitudes and behaviors (+27.8% for helping in the kitchen) and food choices (+6% for eating vegetables). Further research is warranted to determine the impact of similar programs.

Recommendations: It is imperative to assess the baseline abilities and accessibilities of families including, but not limited to, internet access, food skills, and motivation to participate. Given the feasibility and apparent effectiveness of programs such as this one, initiatives that direct their efforts towards supporting families in participating should be upheld through community subsidization and endorsement.

Significance: Online workshops have the potential to broaden the reach of successful education programs, which may benefit children and their families in meaningful ways.

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