

## Impact of a K – 8 Nutrition Education Program on Student, Teacher, and School-wide Practices

Wood L, Wolff C, Bianco-Simeral S, Goto K.

**Purpose:** Low income children are at especially risk for low fruit and vegetable consumption. Diets lacking in fruits and vegetables are associated with chronic diseases. This study assessed the impact and process evaluation of a K-8 nutrition education program that targets fruit and vegetable consumption at low income schools.

**Methods:** 297 teachers employed at the schools involved with the nutrition education program participated in a Likert statement survey for this study.

**Results:** The study revealed that 93.3% of teachers reported they conducted Harvest of the Month (HOTM) taste testings five or more times a year. Teachers who were high implementers of HOTM activities were significantly more likely to strongly agree that their students were more receptive to eating fruits ( $p=.01$ ) and vegetables ( $p=.03$ ). High implementers of all nutrition education activities are significantly more likely to strongly agree that their students are motivated to improve their eating habits, that there has been a positive change toward healthier classroom snacks, and that they have a food policy in their classroom. There were significant differences in the mean score for teacher's perceptions that students are less interested in soda between high (mean = 3.56) and low (mean = 3.33) levels of implementation of total nutrition education activities ( $p=.043$ ). Teachers who report conducting more nutrition education activities also report more positive behavior change in their students, in their own classrooms conduct, and in the school environment. Teacher's perceptions of student, teacher, and school nutrition related attitudes and practices increased each year over the three year