

# Putting Research to Work for Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## "Just Say It Like It Is!" Use of a Community-Based Participatory Approach to Develop a Technology-Driven Food Literacy Program for Adolescents

Wickham, C. A., & Carbone, E. T. (2018). "Just say it like it is!" Use of a community-based participatory approach to develop a technology-driven food literacy program for adolescents. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 38(2), 83-97. doi:10.1177/0272684X17749572

**SUMMARY:** Helping adolescents improve their nutritional knowledge and behaviors and physical activity is an important part of improving their health. This study describes the process and results of utilizing community-based participatory research to adapt a nutrition and health intervention for teenagers to include components of technology. An advisory Kid Council provided feedback on the researchers' planned intervention adaptations, and a pilot study demonstrated how the adaptation was received by participants. Most components were well-received though limited participation may have reduced impact.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Significant changes were made to the content and delivery of the FuelUp&Go! intervention based on feedback from adolescent participants in the advisory Kid Council, including the use of emojis in text messages and simple, direct statements.
- Kid Council and pilot study participants scored low (three out of nine possible points) on nutrition knowledge, and minimal gains were seen post-intervention.
- Most program components were well-liked to moderately-liked; participants rated most highly the website, weekly food/health tips, and the weekly topics of advertising and sugar-added beverages.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS:

- Support adolescents in utilizing in-person and technology-based nutrition and activity programs to improve health
- Examine ways nutrition and activity programs can be incorporated into after-school programming in order to be successful

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM LEADERS:

- Provide basic nutrition and physical activity information for adolescents such as exchanging drinking water for sugar-sweetened beverages
- Develop activities to help adolescents learn to set realistic goals for how they might increase their physical activity

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS:

- Continue to support the development of technology-based or technology-enhanced nutrition and physical activity interventions for adolescents
- Encourage collaboration between positive youth development programs and nutrition professionals to develop adolescent-approved programming

# Putting Research to Work for Families



## METHODS

- FuelUp&Go! was adapted from a previously tested intervention and delivered in six in-person sessions; participants also utilized a fitness tracker, had access to a resource website, and received text messages.
- The Kid Council met twice with an adult facilitator and gave feedback on the use of text messages, music, incentives, activities, recipes, and surveys in FuelUp&Go! prior to the study; these sessions were audio recorded.
- Pre- and post-intervention surveys were administered in the pilot study, including a knowledge, attitude, and behavior survey, a food consumption survey, and a program evaluation.
- Data were analyzed by comparing the pre- and post-intervention surveys.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Adolescent participants were recruited from a local YMCA in Springfield, MA.
- Kid Council participants included three males and one female, ages 13-16 years old. One participant was Latino, two were Black, and one was multiracial.
- Pilot study participants included three males and six females, ages 11-16 years old. No other demographic information was provided.
- While 21 participants were recruited for the pilot study, only nine completed all necessary steps, including parental consent and pre- and post-intervention surveys.

## LIMITATIONS

- The Kid Council included four adolescents and the pilot study included nine, leading to minimal ability to generalize conclusions.
- Without comparison to a control group, it is hard to know whether the intervention provided any impact.
- Few participants utilized the fitness trackers and interactive text messaging, and there was inconsistent attendance at the in-person sessions, so it is unclear whether there was enough participation to demonstrate impact.
- Some participants' answer patterns on the surveys were of questionable validity, such as providing the same response for an entire list of questions.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Utilize a larger sample to better demonstrate impact of the intervention
- Demonstrate causal impact by using a control group or comparable intervention and randomizing structure
- Restructure survey administration to reduce test fatigue and improve validity of results

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

**Design**  
★ ★ ★  
**Limited**  
Research Plan  
and Sample

**Methods**  
★ ★ ★  
**Limited**  
Measurement  
and Analysis

**Limitations**  
★ ★ ★  
**Several**

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>