

BESPOKE SCHOOL COOKERY LESSONS TO ENHANCE A NATIONAL HEALTHY EATING CAMPAIGN

Carla Hobart, Catherine Huntley, Bimpe Oki, and Vida Cunningham.
Public Health Department, Lambeth Council - publichealth@lambeth.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION

Primary schools can find it challenging to effectively provide cookery classes due to limited equipment, space, or relevant teaching skills. In addition, school-based cookery lessons do not necessarily promote healthy food choices and behaviours. Lambeth commissioned specific, locally-relevant, health-promoting cooking sessions to be delivered in local schools. These cooking sessions were provided as part of a suite of activities intended to locally enhance a national media campaign encouraging children to eat more vegetables. These activities formed an element of Lambeth's wider work aimed at reducing childhood obesity in the borough.

AIM

To encourage children to connect with the messages of a national healthy eating campaign through the use of hands-on cooking experience delivered in an accessible, locally-relevant format.

METHODS

Cookery class content and resource development

- Working with an experienced provider, developed a low cost, culturally appropriate, vegetable-based recipe which was tested to ensure it was replicable
- Created a script containing health-promoting messages for use in delivery of lessons
- Developed written materials containing the recipe and other health-promoting messages linked to the campaign, for children to take home after lessons.

Promotion and Enrolment of schools

- A priority list of primary schools was drawn based on need and existing capacity to accommodate the intervention during the Spring Term.
- Prioritised schools were invited to participate on a first come first serve basis
- Prerequisite of participation included enlisting parent and teacher volunteers and involvement in evaluation

Cookery Classes

- One hour cookery lessons were delivered to Key Stage 2 children across 12 different schools during the school day
- Sessions were co-led by the provider and a pupil chosen by the school in a fun and interactive way
- Qualitative feedback was gathered from children and teachers during and after the event

RESULTS

Over 6 weeks, 2,382 children participated.

Comments from children who participated in the classes included:

"I learned about eating healthily."

"I learned how to cook something new."

Comments from teachers who observed and/or facilitated classes included:

"The children understood how a simple recipe can be executed and fresh food and be prepared."

"The children thoroughly enjoyed it!"

"I have spoken with a number of year 5 and 6 children and they are really fired up by everything they learned. It was an experience that they will remember for a long time."

Observation of Public Health Team:

- Children were enthusiastic and willing to learn new skills for food preparation.
- Lessons were structured in a way that encouraged children to replicate their recipes at home, thus also engaging their families with the healthy eating messages
- Relationships between Public Health and local schools were strengthened

[Please click to watch the Lambeth Council Cookery Video](#)

The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of the wider Lambeth Public Health Team, VegPower & Cook School.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

Local, vegetable-based cooking classes were well-received. The long term impact of this intervention still needs to be elucidated. More robust evaluation would have enabled us to better determine the effectiveness and spread of the health promotion message. This will be further considered in the next phase of roll out to more schools.

Providing additional activities at local level, such as school cookery sessions, could enhance the impact of national healthy eating media campaigns. The success of the pilot provides an opportunity to further develop sustainable methods with schools to enhance national health campaigns.

