

METHODS

The ideas in this guidebook come from the high school students at three high schools in Iowa (Waukee, Pleasant Valley and Cedar Rapids Jefferson). Through a series of meetings and activities during the 2013-2014 school year, the students outlined the barriers to increasing school breakfast participation, identified what their peers believe are benefits to eating school breakfast, brainstormed ideas for improving breakfast participation and eventually developed a Twitter campaign promoting school breakfast. Students also learned about how school breakfast is funded, what the breakfast requirements are, and the other constraints food service programs face in delivering school breakfast.

All Iowa high schools were presented with the opportunity to participate in this project. Of the schools that expressed interest, three schools were selected based on their size, location, free and reduced-lunch percentages, and their enthusiasm for the project.

The following schools participated in this project:

Waukee High School

Location: Waukee, IA

Total enrollment: 1,475 students

Participants: Marketing Advertising Class

Pleasant Valley High School

Location: Bettendorf, IA

Total enrollment: 1,250 students

Participants: Informal student group

Jefferson High School

Location: Cedar Rapids, IA

Total enrollment: 1,610 students

Participants: DECA club*

*(organization focused on student development of marketing, finance, and entrepreneurial skills)

Four meetings were held at each school. The meetings were based on the Theory of Active Involvement (Greene, 2013), which suggests that involving adolescents in a process of active engagement and self-reflection can lead to sustained health interventions in this population.⁸ Specifically, the theory has been applied as a framework to study how guiding a group of adolescents in generating a health message can both influence peer audiences and lead to lasting and effective changes in the group itself.

Concept mapping was used as a way to gather information from the students and understand how they organize and prioritize their thoughts about school breakfast. Concept mapping requires the students to brainstorm ideas. The ideas are ranked by the students and sorted into piles that represent bigger concepts. Through statistical analysis the ideas are grouped into categories that represent how the students understand how the concepts are related to each other.

⁸ Greene, K. (2013). The theory of active involvement: Processes underlying interventions that engagement adolescents in message planning and/or production. *Health Communication*, 28(7).

Meeting 1: Introduction to the importance of breakfast, information about school breakfast, brainstorming about barriers, motivators and benefits to school breakfast, and discussion about other information needed.

Meeting 2: Ranking and pile sorting for brainstormed lists of barriers, motivators, and benefits and discussion of what channel to use to communicate more effectively with their peers.

Meeting 3: Brainstorming Twitter options, discussion of types of breakfast food students would enjoy, and discussion of ways to advertise school breakfast in the school.

Meeting 4: Responding to visuals and brainstormed list of tweets.

Each of the schools conducted activities related to school breakfast. Some students developed an online survey, others put together advertising and marketing plans, some developed their own Twitter campaigns with a pre-formed tweet for each school day, and a few students designed a video promoting school breakfast.

BEST PRACTICES

The following recommendations for ‘best practices’ were developed using student input and advice from the three high schools involved in the project, and represent the student perspective on practices related to school breakfast:

AWARENESS

- No one knows about school breakfast. The vast majority of students did not know that breakfast was offered at their school.

Recommendation: You have to find a way to tell them about school breakfast. The use of Twitter or other social media are great ways to communicate with students. The vast majority of the students have Twitter accounts and check their accounts multiple times an hour. Everyone is taking ‘selfies’—what about ‘breakfast selfies’?

- Most students do not know what is served for breakfast and are less likely to show up and eat something when it’s a mystery. They also do not know *where* they would find out what is served for breakfast, despite menus being posted online, posted in classrooms and mentioned in the daily announcements.

Recommendation: You have to tell students what is being served—do not leave it to them to seek out this information on their own. Use social media to tell them each day what the menu is for the next morning’s breakfast.