



# Reading, Writing & Cooking:

## Partnering with Adult Education Classes to Teach Nutrition to Low Income Adults

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### Abstract

#### Objective:

To identify community settings that promote successful nutrition education for low-income adults who are often difficult for nutrition educators to reach

#### Use of Theory or Research:

Adult learning theory guided the teaching of lessons. Research indicated that low-income adults can be difficult to engage in nutrition education due to multiple stressors that often limit their ability to attend classes.

#### Target Audience:

Low-income adults in Tennessee

#### Description:

A series of three lessons adapted from the USDA curriculum "Loving Your Family, Feeding Their Future" were presented to participants in community settings convenient to low-income adults such as adult education centers, Head Start parent groups, battered women's shelters, and community food banks. County Extension agents taught the lessons to over 175 participants (72% unemployed, 66% food insecure, 58% SNAP recipients, 23% WIC clients) representing a diverse population (39% African American, 57% White, 6% Latino). The lessons engaged the adult audiences and were at an appropriate literacy level.

#### Evaluation:

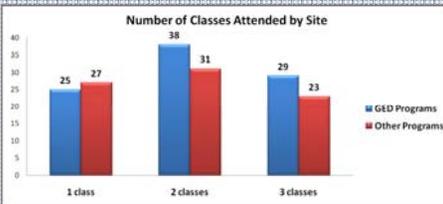
Participants completed written surveys at the beginning and end of the intervention as well as follow-up surveys at 3 and 6 months post-intervention. These evaluation tools measured changes in nutrition and physical activity behaviors.

#### Conclusions and Implications:

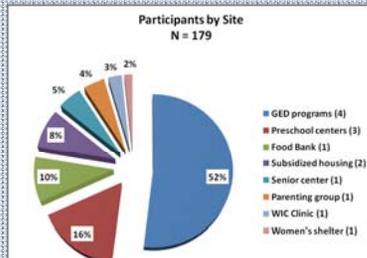
Regardless of setting, participants improved their healthy eating and physical activity levels. Programs presented at adult education centers attracted and retained more participants and reached greater percentages of African Americans and males compared to the other settings. Adult education centers are an important resource for nutrition educators wanting to reach and teach low-income adults.

#### Funding Sources:

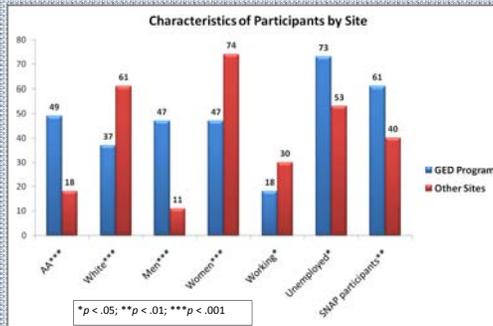
Land Grant Universities, SNAP-Ed Programs, University of Tennessee Extension, Tennessee Department of Human Services



### Results



Lessons taught in 14 counties.  
Number in parentheses = # of counties who delivered programs at that type of site



#### Mean Changes in Selected Nutrition Behaviors

VARIABLES	BASELINE		3 MONTHS	
	GED Programs	Other Programs	GED Programs	Other Programs
# of fast food meals per week	1.96	1.83	1.50	1.76
# times physically active per week	3.09	3.08	3.60	2.85
Eat more than 1 kind of fruit each day	2.18	1.89	2.44	2.18
Eat more than 1 kind of vegetable each day	2.64	2.51	3.00	2.85
Eat 2 or more vegetables at main meal	2.78	2.71	3.20	2.76
Read food labels to select healthy foods	1.74	2.05	2.30	2.39
# daily servings of vegetables	2.52	2.46	2.67	2.79
# daily servings of fruit	2.06	1.66*	2.20	2.16*

\*t(31) -3.86, p < .01



### Lessons Learned

#### Advantages of Working with GED Classes

- Consistent attendance
- Strong support from GED teacher.
- Reinforcement of lessons by GED teacher
- Participants working on literacy skills so not an issue for program materials
- Diversity of class participants = rich class discussion
- Rural participants readily complete evaluation forms

#### Challenges of Working with GED Classes

- Urban participants hesitant to fill out evaluation forms
- Diverse ages and experience = difficulty engage all in audience at same time.
- Participants sometimes unable to focus on nutrition lesson because focus on GED assignments.
- Managing large class size (25-30 per session) can be difficult during group recipe work

### Teaching Tips

- Respect participants' privacy.
- Recognize the life experiences that each participant brings to the table.
- Link lesson concepts to familiar situations and experiences.
- Allow participants to share their insights.
- Limit class size to fewer than 20
- Divide large class into smaller groups for cooking activities
- Use volunteers or facility staff members to help supervise cooking
- Encourage discussion and interaction among class participants.
- Assess learning needs of audience related to food preparation skills such as:
  - How to read a recipe
  - Identifying and using basic kitchen tools
- Allow plenty of time for cooking; be prepared for the unexpected when working with large groups, knives, and appliances.
- Ask open-ended questions; guide participants to discover the answers
- Avoid reading from a planned lesson or a PowerPoint.
- Incorporate interactive games and activities.
- Make learning fun! Remember that adults like to play, too.