September, 2012 Topics

Highlights from the 2012 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) annual conference

Recommended resources

Highlights from the 2012 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) annual conference

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In this edition of Nutrition for Family Living, we share highlights from the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) annual conference in Washington D.C. this past July. Many of the presentations are posted (or will be posted) on the SNEB website at http://www.sneb.org/events/2012_Conference_Programs.html?utm_source=SNEB+Members+2012&utm_campaign=3738698f29-Weekly_Policy_Update05_28_12&utm_medium=email. Highlights are organized by topic area to make it easier to locate items of interest.

Culinary Acculturation and Building Relationships through Food

The Culinary Acculturation: Building Relationships through Food preconference focused on cultural competence. Staff from Washington State University Extension shared The Diversity Wheel which shows the many dimensions of diversity in multiple layers – Personality, Primary Dimension (age, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race), Secondary Dimension (home/geographic location, income, personal habits, religion, recreational habits, health status, educational background, work experience, appearance, parental status, marital status), and Organizational Dimensions (program area, job, seniority, work location, union affiliation, management status.) During this session we discussed how differences among individuals could bring strengths to a team and/or conflict.

The Diversity Wheel

During the second half of this session we rotated among food preparation stations that highlighted concepts where confusion may arise when working with different populations. For example, if program participants emigrated from a country that used the metric system or weight rather than volume, they may find it confusing to use measuring cups (fluid ounces) or ounces to measure rice and other foods. Similarly, in some countries vegetables are almost always eaten cooked and there may be reluctance to try raw veggies. It was interesting to learn that there isn’t a good word in Spanish for ‘whole grain’ and therefore additional explanation on translated handouts may be necessary.

The University of California Extension presented Designing the EFNEP Food Descriptions Guide for 5 Cultural Groups for the Dietary Recall Process, which details their effort to improve the accuracy of the EFNEP multi-pass dietary recall tool. Sixty EFNEP educators and 9,000 EFNEP participants compiled food lists for 5 cultural groups: American, Hispanic, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. The culturally diverse food lists provided information on preferred brands, styles, and other foods or condiments that may be paired with a particular food. Fifty-four educators reported that the 22 page food guide improved the accuracy of their data collection. WNEP specialists will find out more information about the cultural food guides and explore if they are appropriate for use in WNEP.

Media/marketing messages

Scared Fat was a session presented by representatives of the Alliance for Food and Farming, a nonprofit organization representing farmers. The speakers presented research indicating that media headlines/messages such as “the dirty dozen” or “toxic vegetables” may contribute to people purchasing fewer fruits and vegetables especially in low-income households where organic produce is considered too expensive. One study indicated that 58% of low-income consumers were concerned about produce safety (compared to 53% of consumers from all income levels.) Responses to the presentation from the audience varied. One audience member pointed out that many farmers are incorporating organic techniques even though they are not organic farmers. Another person stressed the importance of helping people think critically about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, and the risks of consuming pesticides. Another audience member expressed the need for more information/research on the toxicity of various pesticides consumed especially if there may be cumulative effects over time. In summary, discussions and debates about organic vs. non-organic produce are alive and well.

Vegetables Make the Meal was a short presentation on research that looked at factors that motivate caregivers to serve vegetables for dinner. Research faculty at Cornell University found that when vegetables are served with a meal, both the meal and its entrée were anticipated to be tastier. The meal was also rated as more complete and loving. The presence of a vegetable also led people to rate the meal preparer as more thoughtful and attentive. Positive emotional responses to serving vegetables could motivate caregivers to serve more vegetables with meals.

Evaluating Content and Formatting Preferences of SNAP-Eligible Individuals for Development of Nutrition Newsletters provided information that could be used for newsletters for SNAP-Ed audiences. They found the top content area themes were healthy eating, vegetables, recipes, helping children to be healthy and physical activity. They found that people preferred bright, eye-catching colors and color blocking, relatively short easy to read text, and applicability to their daily lives. Spanish-speaking individuals preferred a newsletter that included both English and Spanish in one newsletter. English-speaking individuals preferred separate newsletters – one English, one Spanish – because a combined language newsletter seemed too cluttered to them.
Staff from Cornell University Extension shared how they are Expanding Community Nutrition Education to include Environmental Change in New York. One strategy they are using is to work with nutrition educators and their supervisors to enhance collaborative relationships within their communities. The goal of these collaborations is to make it easier for families to adopt the healthier eating and physical activity behaviors that nutrition educators focus on in their SNAP-Ed educational events. Unrestricted funds are used to cover a portion of educators’ time to accommodate increased involvement in community coalitions.

Simply Good Eating for English Language Learners Program Demonstrates Positive Participant Outcomes was a poster reporting the results of a study of a University of Minnesota Extension, SNAP-Ed curriculum. Approximately 300 multi-ethnic, multi-lingual adults with low incomes participated in an average of 6 ½ hours of education and completed both a pre- and post-survey. Statistically significant improvements were noted in reported food intake, food safety, and food resource management practices. Improvements were positively associated with the number of sessions that participants attended. This curriculum is available through the FLP resource database.

A poster by USDA-FNS, Whole-Grain Messages: What Resonates with Moms reported on the results of focus groups with low-income mothers that helped to inform the development of whole-grain messages, tips and communication tools for USDA programs. They found that mothers knew whole grains were healthy foods but few knew about specific benefits. Barriers to eating whole grains included taste, time, and difficulty identifying whole grains. Message themes that evoked feeling of empowerment and tapped into mothers’ abilities to influence their children’s long-term health and eating behaviors resonated most strongly. Mothers responded most positively to tips and advice they considered practical, underscored why they should adopt specific behaviors, and were flexible with different choices. Mothers looked for information such as healthy eating tips through online sources.

Evaluation of the Food Day School Curriculum to Teach Children Why and How to EAT REAL poster presented results of a study to assess this curriculum developed by Columbia University. Topics covered in this 5-lesson curriculum focus on the messages eat real, mostly plants and not too much. 48 students who participated in all 5 lessons at a summer camp or after-school program were asked to describe the meaning of the curriculum messages and application in their lives. Students’ responses were scored on a 3-point scale with 1 being ‘little understanding’, 2 being ‘some understanding’ and 3 being ‘strong understanding.’ For ‘meaning’ questions (i.e., themes related to why the behavior is important), 49% and 38% received scores of 3 and 2 respectively. For the ‘application’ questions (i.e., specific strategies they are using in their lives), 56% and 38% received scores of 3 and 2 respectively. The presenters concluded that students who participated in this preliminary study understood and applied the curriculum messages. Since this curriculum was added to the FLP resource database last fall, we were pleased to learn that it was effective in promoting behavior change.

Miles of Aisles; A Shopping Matters Experience using Share Our Strength’s (SOS) Shopping Matters grocery store tour allowed participants to experience how education delivered directly at the store can change attitudes and behaviors of families. The Shopping Matters resource was designed to improve the ability to make choices that maximize both nutrition and food budgets while shopping to improve nutritional behaviors and reduce obesity. Participants attended a mock grocery store experience where sections of a grocery store were set up as stations in the room and facilitators at each station demonstrated talking points and key messages and provided samples of handouts and recipes. Shopping Matters builds upon the Cooking Matters resource from SOS and is a facilitator led store shopping tour for families/individuals with limited incomes that lasts for 60-90 minutes. All the materials are free and require partner stores, generally where participants already shop. In WNEP we are looking closely at the
Shopping Matters resource for program applicability. Many discussions have begun on how this resource can be integrated for possible grocery store tour activities.

**Universal Nutrition Education for Low-Income Developmentally Disabled Adults** was a poster session presented by University of Maryland about a program designed to teach food preparation skills to encourage behavior and environmental changes specific to MyPlate. The target audience is low income developmentally disabled adults and group home staff. It uses a hands-on approach to preparing low-cost recipes. There are a weekly series of 90-minute classes for 5 weeks. Evaluation indicates there are positive behavior changes such as requests for healthy meals, trying new foods and acquisition of new kitchen skills. There are a limited number of resources for this population and this resource shows some promise. WNEP Specialists working with the “Other Adults” workgroup plan to review this resource and determine if any applicability for SNAP-Ed programming.

Communities

Researchers at Northern Illinois University looked at *Perceived Benefits and Barriers to Eating Healthfully among School-based Food Pantry Clients.* 175 adult food pantry clients with at least one child in school responded to a survey addressing perceived benefits and barriers. Perceived benefits that encouraged clients to eat healthfully were losing weight (23%), feeling better (23%), maintaining overall health (12.7%) and treating disease (12.1%). Perceived barriers that stopped clients from eating healthy foods were cost (66.7%), taste (12.7%), and not knowing what foods were healthy (9.5%). The majority of those surveyed were interested in attending nutrition education classes. Topics in which they were interested were shopping and stretching food dollars (50.7%), how to cook tasty, low-cost food (17.7%), identification of health foods and nutrition (14.7%) and how to feed children and get them to eat (13.2%).

**The Limits of Changing Defaults in Fast-Food Restaurants and the Surprising Solution for a Better Happy Meal** poster reported results of a study looking at whether making apple slices the default side dish in a children’s fast-food meal lead to healthier food choices by children. Fifteen children from low-income families between the ages of 6 and 8 years participated in the study. While attending a summer day camp, the children ordered meals from a popular national fast food chain on two separate days one week apart. On one of the days, they were given French fries as the default and on the other day they were given apple slices as the default. Both days they were allowed to switch if they wanted to. When French fries were the default option, only 1 child switched to apple slices but when apple slices were the default option all but 2 children switched to French fries. The results indicate that default options in food choices may not be a realistic solution for encouraging better food choices. They suggest that offering a reduced amount of French fries and some apple slices may be a better solution for encouraging healthier eating behaviors.

A panel of video producers and project leaders from the Baltimore area showed a new documentary film, *Cafeteria Man,* that chronicles the efforts of a team led by food-service director Tony Geraci, to improve Baltimore school system’s meal programs. Involvement of food-service workers, parent and school leaders was key to making positive change. Numerous barriers were encountered along the way, including political pressures and roadblocks backed by vendors who wanted to maintain the previous system. Many of these accomplishments are being maintained by the team, now that Mr. Geraci has taken a new food-service leadership position in New Orleans.

With the help of a USDA/AFRI grant in 2010, Cornell University has established a *Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs* to help researcher, Food Service Directors, and policy makers design sustainable research-based lunchrooms that subtly guide smarter choices. For example, by introducing a well-designed “healthy choices” convenience line, one school increased the
number of students consuming “healthy items” by 35%. For more information, see http://smarterlunchrooms.org/index.html.

Technology

Michigan Team Nutrition has developed 38 short YouTube segments for school food service providers. The *Healthier School Meal-Fresh Meals YouTube Videos* were designed to provide information and ideas on preparing fresh, locally grown produce in school meals in an on-demand format. Foodservice professionals who watched the videos and completed an evaluation reported that they learned at least one culinary technique that they could use, identified techniques they plan to try, and stated that they would use the videos for staff training and with students in the classroom. Although developed for school food service personal, these videos may have be of interest to nutrition educators and families. Several FL Specialists looked at some of the video clips and wondered whether they were practical for all Food Service Directors. The videos are available at: http://www.youtube.com/user/miteamnutrition1.

Virginia’s Family Nutrition Program used *Video Podcasts to Reach Low-Income Virginians*. The podcasts were originally produced by Cooperative Extension and dietetic students. They were shared with the Virginia Department of Social Services so clients could watch the short videos while waiting for their appointments and enhance interest in the Family Nutrition Program (FNP/SNAP-Ed). Between April 15 and December 31, 2011, the site had 1,230 unique page views and the most viewed podcast, “Shopping on a Budget,” had 285 views. Each video podcast is about 2 ½ minutes in length and features at least one nutrition message. Virginia food banks and WIC offices have put links to these podcasts on their websites. Virginia FNP is planning to produce another collection of video podcasts in 2012. The video podcasts can be viewed at http://www.fcs.ext.vt.edu/fnh/fnp/eatsmart/.

*Changing Food Behavior through an E-mail Newsletter* presented the results of an evaluation of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension *Cook It Quick* e-newsletter. 729 of the newsletter subscribers, approximately 9% of total subscribers, completed an on-line survey. Of those responding to the survey:

84% reported gaining ideas for preparing foods faster or more easily; 45% reported improved cooking practices; 42% reported saving money; 40% reported cooking with healthier fats; 40% reported handling foods more safely; 39% reported preparing a greater variety of food and eating more home-cooked meals; 32% reported reducing intake of sodium; and 29% reported cooking with more whole wheat flour. The presenter concluded that e-newsletters are useful for reaching a large number of individuals and can lead to behavior change.

*Using Technology to Assess Professional Development Resources from the Cooperative Extension System* introduced a distance-delivered learning resource from the University of Minnesota that is an online nutrition course for new hires. This is a 7-week, facilitator-led course that focuses on basic nutrition. This course allows for significant social presence by using interactive tools to create a more learner-focused environment. Distance delivered learning environments need to be communities of inquiry or have incorporated in them three things: cognitive presence, social presences and teaching presence. Social presence is important because sharing time is important when staff development opportunities are offered and it helps with critical thinking skills and creates comfort, especially among those not familiar with distance learning. Cognitive presence provides opportunities to apply learning and assess knowledge gained. Social presence supports cognitive presence. The online course has an evaluation component, online quizzes and is regularly updated and has an engaged facilitator. WNEP is considering how to expand training opportunities through distance education as a means to provide training more readily and reduce costs for travel. A more in-depth review of this learning opportunity will provide some considerations for planning.
AFRI research projects
For the first time, all (52) of the current National Institute for Food and Agriculture, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) grant recipients presented posters on their research at SNEB. Although many of the posters were limited to plans for their projects because it is too early to present results, it was useful to learn about what research is occurring and a ‘heads up’ for future NFL articles. Overwhelming enthusiasm for viewing the posters and talking to presenters could lead to combining these presentations with SNEB from this point forward.
Recommended resources

Nutrition.gov has a variety of wonderful resources including basic shopping information, ethnic cooking information and a link to the USDA nutrient database. A recent addition is information and a six-minute video on farmers’ markets.


Updated Would You Like to Save Hundreds of Dollars? Brochure to reflect school year 2012-2013 free or reduced-price school meals eligibility,  
https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/tch_res2/resourceDetails.cfm?rid=6420