

NUTRITION – HEALTHY CHOICES, HEALTHY HABITS

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Project Description

According to the QEP a goal of the Physical Education and Health program is for students to “learn to take charge of their own health and well-being”. The major aim of our project was to create lessons that would educate students about healthy eating habits while integrating other subjects specifically math and science. By teaching students about nutrition, our goal was to arm them with the tools they needed to advocate for themselves and learn how making healthy choices can become healthy eating habits as they grow older.

What Went Well

The project started off very well where we established clear goals, assigned workload and discussed a time frame and scheduling. Both teachers involved have also worked together in the past and entered this project with a like-minded vision, a clear understanding of the QEP and knowledge of what appeals to our target audience. The time that we did spend together was used effectively to create units that link directly to the QEP’s science, health and math curriculum. We feel that the units we created were engaging, inclusive and focused a lot on using hands on manipulates. In addition, we included some introductory units, which were not part of our original plan to help gauge students prior knowledge and get students ready to dive deeper into the curriculum. We believed that this was necessary not only to have students frame their learning in order to give them an outlook and reason for why these concepts are helpful; but was also essential to help teachers get a more realistic and positive view on promoting these concepts that have traditionally been seen as secondary accompaniments to the science and physical education curriculum.

Challenges

Unfortunately due the COVID-19 pandemic we were not able to use 8 (4 each) of our professional days to work together and meet to complete this project. While the PDIG due date was extended to June 1st the majority of our days were scheduled to take place between March and April in order to give us time to try out some of the lessons with our students and reflect and make changes to our work as needed. While we could have used our remaining days after the Quebec government chose to reopen schools on May 4, we felt it would be insensitive to our colleagues as many teachers applied for an exemption to not return to work, and we did not. Based on our supervisor’s recommendation, we decided to simply finish up the units we had planned and submit our final report which is why we did not write the 4 missing journal entries as they would be contrived and not authentic.

Goals

The major goal of the lessons created was for students to start thinking and questioning for themselves their own food choices and eating habits. As a by-product, we hoped that participating in these lessons would help influence choices of food purchases, packing lunches and perhaps promote family togetherness through preparing meals together. When students learn to be accountable for their food choices and insist on healthier nutrients, they become empowered to have a well-balanced life. We feel that our units met our goal and above all are a starting point to what can hopefully become a collaborative continuation and strengthening of lessons by other teachers and schools. These lessons can meet goals beyond simply targeting student learning and branch into influencing teachers as well.

Project Outcomes

As previously mentioned we were not able to teach any of our units to our students due to COVID-19. The units created have not been tested or used and hence we were not able to reflect upon them and make changes. Our intended outcome was for students to become thinkers, questioners, researchers and advocators for their own health. While we were not able to follow the traditional PDIG model or use all of our substitute days, we were able to finish our units and hope to share our ideas with students and staff and collaborate with other teachers next year.

Reinvestment

The created units and resources were made with specific grade levels in mind and were directly linked to the QEP, most aptly with the science and math and health curriculum. These units can therefore be used by K-6 teachers in Quebec, and/or modified to work with other provincial curriculums. As physical education teachers we know the benefits of living an active lifestyle, but so often the emphasis rests purely on activity and ignores diet. Next year we both personally aim to use the units ourselves with our students, as we are passionate about the need to educate students about nutrition and would like to opportunity to follow through with this project and reflect on our work.