

Logic Model

Outcomes

- Hands on oral health and nutrition education curriculum delivered to over ~2,300 Pre-K-5th grade students
- Measurable improvement in oral health literacy after participation in the program.
- Over 20 students referred to establish dental home at UAB Finn Clinic.

Outputs

- Oral health, nutrition, and physical education curriculum for Pre-K- 5th grade children
- Custom designed brushing logs and take home sheets to encourage generational learning.
- Referral system for students to establish a dental home

Activities

- Weekly after-school sessions focusing on nutrition, physical, and oral hygiene education
- Train-the-Trainer session for over 100 volunteers
- Graduation ceremony with goodie bags stuffed with tools and supplies to reinforce oral hygiene and physical education at home.

Inputs

- 100+ hours for planning and curriculum integration
- Paper & ink for surveys & brushing logs
- Videos for train the trainer session
- Site and educational mentor guidance and expertise week to week.

Introduction

Across the United States, dental caries remain the most common chronic disease of childhood and compared to their counterparts throughout the country, Alabama's children are experiencing dental caries at higher rates. According to the Alabama Oral Health Survey in 2011-2013, nearly half of Alabama's kindergarten and third grade children had a history of tooth decay and about 20% of them had untreated decay. As aspiring pediatric dentists, we know the importance of children maintaining a healthy smile in order to eat properly, speak, feel good about themselves, and do well in school. Tooth decay can not only impact a child's oral health, but also their educational experience and quality of life. With cavities being a preventable and progressive disease, we believe that oral hygiene and nutrition education are two of the best tools the profession of dentistry has to improve oral hygiene, and in turn, improve oral health outcomes. By intentionally designing nutrition learning experiences accompanied by a sustainable oral health education module that highlights healthy habits and practices that students could realistically integrate into their daily lives, we aim to inspire the voluntary adoption of healthy nutritional and oral hygiene behaviors that could improve their health trajectories despite the path their environment and social determinants of health may have them bound for.



First Day of Healthy Happy Kids

Impact

Out of the 106 Pre-K -5th grade students surveyed, 52% of the students surveyed answered 5+ questions wrong on the pre-survey. By the end of the program, no child answered 5+ answers wrong, and only 11% of students answered 1 question incorrectly. By integrating an oral health and nutrition education curriculum into the existing Healthy Happy Kids curriculum, oral hygiene instruction and nutrition education will continue to be delivered to Birmingham Public Schools after school program students for as long as the MHERC has the program. Additionally, we hope the parent handouts and at-home brushing logs we designed for the students to take home will spark generational learning and even lead to healthier behaviors for the students' caregivers. Moreover, by providing referral cards for HHK students we were able to connect students to a dental home for comprehensive and preventive dental treatment and care. To expand the sustainability plan, we recorded a video demonstrating oral hygiene instruction that will be posted on the MHERC website along with the brushing log and handouts to be accessed by teachers and after school instructors as educational tools in the future.

Critical Assessment

When beginning this project, we encountered many challenges. From searching for a site partner and solidifying implementation dates and timelines to changing the population being served and our original project plan, the theme of our fellowship year has been adaptability. With every obstacle, we ultimately found a solution that allowed us to better design the curriculum or engage with the students. With the support of our incredible mentors and by remaining grounded in our goals for ourselves and our fellowship year, we were able to view our challenges as opportunities to rise to the occasion and create something even better than we had originally imagined. Throughout our fellowship year we have learned that leadership is more than just an idea. It is an action that requires hard work, fidelity, discipline and compassion. We learned that sustainable change does not occur overnight. No matter how intricately devised your master plan is, these lofty goals, resolutions, or intentions cannot remain relevant or effective in our ever-evolving communities if we only work on them every once in a while. We have also been inspired to dream bigger and start even if we do not have all the answers. As this fellowship comes to a close, we can confidently say that we have grown as leaders and dental professionals. We transition into Fellows for Life feeling encouraged and fueled to continue to keep service as a core value in our lives as we enter into careers as dental health care providers.



Teaching the HHK Curriculum at Tuggle Elementary School

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Tiffany Osborne, Dr. Michelle Robinson, Kristin Boggs, Dr. Raquel Mazer, Susan Driggers, Katherine Berdy, Keaton Johnson, the Tuggle Elementary After School Staff & Dean Taichman of the UAB SOD for all their help, encouragement, and support throughout our fellowship year!