Raising awareness of good oral health to preschool children/
Good oral health; beautiful smiles

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Raising awareness of good oral health to preschool children/ Good oral health; beautiful smiles

Areli Guadalupe Cruz Campos

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies
Introduction

Children from low-income families may be less likely to receive dental care and may have dental health problems. These children may lack oral health literacy, which may contribute to their tooth decay, and affect their school performance and the quality of life. Therefore, I created a three-day lesson on how to maintain good oral health for preschoolers at the Pajaro Valley Unified School District/Child development Center-Linscott state preschool in Watsonville, California.

Need Statement

Dental health problems like tooth decay and untreated cavities are chronic health problems that affect preschoolers. Dental problems affect the child's oral health, the ability to sleep, eat, talk in addition to their academic performance (Fielding, 2016). Tooth decay can be prevented but the lack of access for dental health, the high consumption of processed foods that contain added sugars, and low oral health literacy are contributors to this chronic disease among preschoolers.

Having an oral health problem like tooth decay or fixing a cavity is expensive, particularly for those who are low income. The government-instituted Medicaid, under the Affordable Care Act, can pay for treatment, but unfortunately, only 20% of the practicing dentists nationwide accept Medicaid (Bersell, 2017). Because of that, there are few clinics available to these low-income families and appointment availability is extended up to two months or more. At least two-thirds of the population who lack a Medicaid dentist have died from complications of an untreated dental abscess (Bersell, 2017). In some other cases, patients seek emergency help at the hospital, which is even more expensive. The emergency department of most hospitals is not trained to offer comprehensive dental care but to prescribe analgesics and antibiotics, so they refer patients to a dentist that patients still cannot afford to pay
Raising awareness of good oral health to preschool children (Bersell, 2017). This is a vicious circle from which patients with dental problems do not get treatment.

Added sugar is found in many foods that children consume and is not good for children's oral health. Among the products with added sugar that children consume most frequently are sweets, cookies, donuts, ice cream, juices, and soft drinks. There is a special concern in the lollipops or in any sugary candy that is sucked for longer because the longer it lasts in the mouth, the more damage it produces on the teeth (Sheehan, 2018). It is not necessary to remove the sugar from children’s diet but moderate the consumption, in addition to brushing their teeth after having consumed these kinds of foods.

The lack of oral health literacy among preschoolers is another leading cause of tooth decay. Children who do not receive oral health literacy by their primary caregivers or another institution are more likely to suffer from untreated cavities (Braun et al., 2012). Basic oral health literacy like instruction on how to brush the teeth can prevent tooth decay. Children do not receive the proper guidance by their caregivers for various reasons such as not having enough time because of their job, parental low level of education, and language barriers (Gold & Tomar, 2018). Especially farmworkers who spend most of the time working on the fields and have poor knowledge about oral health and tooth decay. Most farmworkers who have a low level of education were not educated about the importance of maintaining good oral health. Parents are not aware that children must brush their teeth at least twice a day or that toothbrushes shouldn’t be shared even with family members (Carrion, Castañeda, Kline, & Tyson, 2010). There is a correlation between parents with low-level education and children with cavities since parents didn’t have the education they are not able to teach their children healthy behaviors by modeling or supporting such behaviors (Brown, Canham & Cureton, 2005). Children learn behaviors most of the time by observing their parents and if parents do not instill/model them proper oral hygiene behavior it is probably that children are not going to do it. A study conducted by
Brown, Canham, and Cureton (2005) shows that mothers do not consider their children need guidance with oral hygiene. But children need assistance to develop oral health behavior. These mothers think children don’t need assistance because they are not informed/educated about the lack of oral health consequences. It is important that parents not only get involved in the education of their children but also in oral health. The language barrier is a common problem among farmworkers in Watsonville. Parents often feel ashamed because they can't communicate in English. Since the majority of the information is written in English parents have a hard time trying to understand it. Children suffer when parental literacy is low and their ability to understand basic information is not developed (Braun et al., 2012).

Given that the prevalence of tooth decay and untreated cavities among preschoolers, I have created a three-day interactive lesson on how to maintain and develop a sense of good oral health for preschoolers at the Pajaro Valley Unified School District/Child development Center-Linscott state preschool in Watsonville, California.

**Theory**

Bandura, in his Social Learning Theory, stated that people learn behavior by observing others, which is called modeling (Bandura, 1977). Children are constantly observing behaviors, movements and ways of speaking from others that they later imitate (Bandura, 1977). Models from where children perceive such behaviors are parents, relatives, teachers, and peers. That’s why it is important to be a good model, so children can learn. Some of these behaviors include being polite, ordering their toys, brushing teeth, etc. There is a greater chance that a child will adopt such behaviors if there is a reinforcement (McLeod, 2016). For example, if a child is congratulated or rewarded after finishing; his or her meal or puts away his or her toys, then the child will continue doing it. Also, children probably continue behaving in a certain way if they feel happy or motivated by doing so. Children are constantly learning if the behavior is interesting for them and they get praise for practicing the behavior that’s how it is adopted. For
instance, if a child observes her or his older sibling being rewarded or congratulated for brushing her or his teeth or cleaning her/his room then that child will want to do the same. This is positive reinforcement because the younger sibling wants to copy the behavior to be rewarded by his/her parents too. One element of the theory that applies to my content is learning behavior by observing others how to do it. During my project/lessons, I will be modeling how to brush teeth correctly. Children will observe and then practice how to do it by imitating what I previously modeled. The second element of Bandura’s theory that applies to my content is feeling motivated or receiving a positive reward for adopting such behavior. Children will receive positive information about maintaining good oral health like they will have beautiful smiles if they brush their teeth. Moreover, I will be distributing stickers to the children who finish the worksheets correctly. Also during the last lesson, I will give everyone a bag with a toothbrush and toothpaste. In this way, the children are being rewarded for brushing their teeth and will have the opportunity to continue practicing at home what they learned during the project.

Consideration of Diversity

The ethnic composition at the Pajaro Valley Unified School District/ Linscott Charter School serving K-8 children is diverse. According to DataQuest California Department of Education, Linscott Charter School has a total of 278 children of which 0.4% are African-American, 2.2% are Asian, 1.1% are Filipino, 75.9% are Hispanic/Latino, 0.4% are Pacific Islander, 18% are White, and 2.2% Two or more races. A total of 53 children are English learners and 44 are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. As reported by DataQuest 6 out of 23 children in the preschool center are considered as English learners and 4 as socioeconomically disadvantaged. I would expect my participants to reflect the ethnic makeup of the school and the proportion of English Learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Since most of the participants are English speakers and six of them are English learners, I will be conducting most of the lessons in English. I will be translating some words in
Spanish for those who are English learners to make sure they understand the content. This project is directed and designed for preschoolers in which most are English speakers and the content would need to be completely translated for those who only speak Spanish. In addition, the curriculum is focused on preschoolers who are just forming dental hygiene habits. If the participants were teenagers, I would have to change the lesson format to address much more complex oral health issues at that age.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to provide three, 15-20 minute lessons to preschoolers at the Pajaro Valley Unified School District/Child Development Center-Linscott state preschool.

By the end of the project, participants will:

1) Describe two reasons why it is important to maintain good oral care.

2) Demonstrate how to brush their teeth correctly.

3) Identify three habits that help them to keep their teeth and gums healthy.

Method

Day 1

The teacher has a dynamic that consists of writing a closed-ended question to which the children answer yes or no and based on their answer, they place a card with their name under the answer.

On the first day, I wrote the question of the day, which was do you brush your teeth?. As the children arrived at the classroom they answered whether they brush their teeth or not and placed their card name on the answer. During the first circle, the teacher introduced me to the participants and then I asked them if they remembered me, most of them did. After that, I explained to them the reason why I was there. The majority of the children at the center are English speakers, so I delivered my lesson mostly in English. Then I started asking the following questions, what do you know about your teeth? How many teeth do you have?. Quickly everyone raised their hands but due to the time, only some had the opportunity to share their
thoughts/answers. I was attentive listening and briefly commenting on their responses while writing them on the board.

In the second circle, I read a book called Brushing Teeth (Schuh, 2008). See Appendix A. After I read the book, I reviewed four vocabulary words which were bristles, cavity, plaque, and swish. Then, I introduced the question of the first learning outcome which is why is it important to brush your teeth? Using pictures, I explained what a cavity is and why it was important to brush teeth. To close the circle time, they sang a rhyme which was plaque-black. The song goes like this: black-plaque these two rhymes. Plaque-black these two, they sound the same at the end.

Day 2

Today's question was, Do you brush your teeth twice a day? So children had to answer yes or no and place their card name under the answer.

Today at the beginning of the first circle, I reviewed why it is important to brush teeth. Participants remembered perfectly what we were talking about last Friday and told me because “teeth could fall” and “you get cavities if you don't brush your teeth”.

After that I showed them the science experiment which consisted of two eggs, one dipped in a glass with water and the other in a glass with Coca-Cola. I asked who likes soda? Most of the participants raised their hands. I explained that the eggshell was like their teeth enamel. Then, they would have to wait like an hour to see the effect that water and soda have on the eggs. So, I put the glasses with the eggs apart. Meanwhile, I presented a mini-play with the puppets where the characters were Lola and Max. Lola and Max eat and drink a lot of soda, candy, and juice, and they do not know how to brush their teeth. So, the group had to show Max and Lola how to brush their teeth. Then I took out the teeth model (See Appendix B) and showed the participants how to brush their teeth correctly with a song. I sang the song first in Spanish and then in English. The song goes like this: upper teeth are brushed down, the lower teeth are brushed up
and the molars and molars make small circles. Los dientes de arriba se cepillan hacia abajo, los
dientes de abajo se cepillan hacia arriba, y las muelitas y las muelitas en círculos.

Then the participants had a half-hour free where they could play and do artwork. During
that half-hour, I saw that three participants were curious to know what was going to happen with
the eggs. One of the participants said “el huevo ya se coció” “the egg is already cooked.” Once
the children were at their tables, they did a prediction activity, where the children had to think
and draw what they thought was going to happen with the eggs of the experiment. See Appendix
C.

In the second circle, children observed what happened with the egg with soda. One child
said "wow, the egg turned brown," I asked them if they think water has sugar and they said no.
Participants observed what happened if they drink soda and don’t brush their teeth. After that
everyone in the circle had the opportunity to brush the brown egg with toothpaste. So, they
observed if they brush it, the egg will turn white again.

Day 3

On Day 3, I read to the participants the book I made. The title of the book is the Happy
and Smiling Tooth. The book is about tips and behaviors to maintain good oral health. Then, I
asked each of the participants what they are going to do to make their teeth happy and smiling.
As they were telling me their responses, I was writing them on the board. After that, we made a
rhyme which was diente and valiente. Afterwards, I handed out a worksheet where participants
connect with a line and circle food that makes teeth healthy and happy. See Appendix D.
Participants drew a line and put an x to the food that makes teeth unhealthy and sad. They also
colored the worksheet. As the participants finished with the worksheet, I gave them a sticker.

During circle two, I explained to the participants today it was my last day with them. I
also told the participants how grateful and happy I was with them for being patient and paying
attention. Then I distributed to each one a bag with a toothbrush, floss, and toothpaste which the children received happily.

**Results**

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would describe two reasons why it is important to maintain good oral care. I think this first learning outcome was met to some extent because due to the limit of time not everyone had the opportunity to share their responses. I read to the participants a book called Brushing Teeth (Schuh, 2008). And then asked them why it is important to brush teeth. The responses of some of the participants were “because your teeth fall out” and “because you get cavities.” Although not all the participants said what they thought, I feel that hearing each other’s responses the rest of the children agreed. I also wrote some of the responses to the questions I asked during the first circle time. What do you know about your teeth? How many teeth do you have?. I asked those questions during the first circle time as a way to give them an idea of what we were going to talk about that day. See Figure 1 for what they said.

Learning outcome 2 was that participants would demonstrate how to brush their teeth correctly. I believe that this learning outcome was met because everybody observed with the teeth model how to brush teeth correctly. I asked for four volunteers to come to the front of the class and demonstrate how they brush their teeth using the teeth model. This learning outcome was reinforced by singing a song at the same time I was showing them how to brush teeth. On top of that, I performed a miniplay with the puppets. The miniplay was about two dogs, Max and Lola, Max had eaten a lot of sweets and drank soda but he didn’t know how to brush his teeth so we had to teach him. Although this was not part of the learning outcome, I wanted to have the participants see how soda affects their teeth. So, we did a science experiment placing an egg in a glass with water and another egg placed in a glass with soda. Participants observed how discolored teeth can become from soda. Also, participants did a prediction activity where they
drew and described what they thought was going to happen with the egg with soda. See Table 1 for a list of their description of each drawing. In the second circle, everyone has a chance to practice their abilities brushing the brown egg with toothpaste. See Figure 2 showing children brushing the egg.

Learning outcome 3 was that participants would identify three habits that help them to keep their teeth and gums healthy. This learning outcome was met because participants were able to mention two or more habits to keep their teeth and gums healthy. After reading the book I made about habits and practices to maintain good oral health everybody has a chance to share what they just learned. This time I asked each one of the participants what they are going to do to maintain good oral health. See Figure 3 for what they said. Moreover, participants were able to classify on a worksheet the kind of foods that are good and bad for their teeth. So, by doing this activity participants were able to identify another practice to maintain good oral health. See Figure 4 for the food classification worksheet.

Discussion

I consider this project successful. The participants were engaged and enjoyed the topic. They also got the purpose of the lessons well and did better than I expected. Since children are learning and one of the ways of learning is by observing others, Bandura’s social learning theory helped participants to learn and reinforce their knowledge about oral health during the three-day lessons. I think they have observed what happens if they do not brush their teeth after consuming sugary products, the kind of foods that are good and bad for their teeth, and habits to maintain good oral health. Because they had the opportunity to visually observe a habit like how brushing helps to protect teeth from cavities, they were able to put hands in action and practice what they just learned. On top of that, participants successfully identified what kind of foods are good and bad for their teeth. When we discussed why it is important to brush teeth, participants knew how
brushing is important to avoid cavities. Also, when participants observed how to brush teeth in a proper way, they got the idea and reinforced what they just learned.

In terms of diversity, I believe my project includes everyone, except that I presumed that participants had no idea why it is important to brush their teeth. But they did know, and participants were aware that they must brush their teeth to avoid cavities. Also, despite some of the participants being classified as English learners, they were able to understand all the material lessons, and they didn't need me to translate some parts of the lessons for them.

If I had to do this over again, I wish I would have been practicing techniques to maintain the attention of participants when I was reading the books. Many of the participants did not pay attention during my reading of the stories. I also would plan more interactive activities so participants might find the content more interesting and fun. Nonetheless, I feel like the participants learned new things about the topic and reinforced their knowledge about oral care.
References


English Learner Students by Language by Grade. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SpringData/StudentsByLanguage.aspx?Level=School&TheYear=2018-19&SubGroup=All&ShortYear=1819&GenderGroup=B&RecordType=EL&CDSCode=44697996049720
Table 1

List of their descriptions about prediction activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Prediction response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queen Emilee</td>
<td>The egg with soda is going to be a bad egg to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itzel</td>
<td>If she drinks soda and donuts, that’s why she has cavities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>What would happen if you drink soda? My teeth would get black cavities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>My teeth fell out because I didn’t brush it. I brush my teeth ten times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leobardo</td>
<td>I was screaming because I want my mommy. My teeth and gums were bleeding, my teeth fell out and now I have new teeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline</td>
<td>Los dientes se cayeron porque comió muchos dulces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>He just wrote his name on the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zain</td>
<td>Water egg I think is going to turn yellow and orange. I think that the egg with the soda is going to be a brown color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mateo</td>
<td>The soda egg is going to turn black because soda has sugar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jax</td>
<td>Blue eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>The egg is going to be a rainbow egg with the soda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issac</td>
<td>Si tomo soda y no cepillo mis dientes se llenan de caries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Los dientes tienen caries, porque tomaron soda y dulces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Son los dientes que me enseñó la maestra. Tienen caries porque comió muchos dulces. Debo lavar mis dientes todos los días.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeria</td>
<td>Los dientes tienen caries, comieron dulces y soda. Yo lavo mis dientes cuando como dulces.</td>
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<td>Natalia</td>
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<td>Diego</td>
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Raising awareness of good oral health to preschool children

Figure 1
Results of what participants respond to questions during first circle time

Brush—Lavarse los dientes at night back and forth
You have to spit out
Te tienes que lavar los dientes
todos los días
You have to put toothpaste
You put just a little bit
How many teeth do you have?
5, 12, 100, 5, 11, 12, 14, 26, 2, 5, 6
Who goes to the dentist? Everybody
Teeth falls out!
Figure 2
Participants demonstrating their abilities in how to brush teeth correctly with an egg
Figure 3
Results of what participants respond to the learning outcome three

2. I brush my teeth up and down and around.
5. Brush my teeth.
6. 1.000 Brush my teeth.
7. Lavarse los dientes.
8. Cambiar mi cepillo.
10. Cepillos.
11. Lavar mis dientes dos veces al día.
13. Lavarme los dientes.
15. Lavarse los dientes dos veces al día.
17. Brush teeth.
18. Eat healthy food and brush teeth.
Figure 4
Food classification worksheet

Healthy Foods: Happy Teeth

Draw a line from the healthy foods to the happy tooth. Draw a line from the sticky foods to the sad tooth.

Name: __________
Appendix A

Brushing Teeth book

Appendix B

Teeth model
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Appendix C

Prediction worksheet

Appendix D

Classification worksheet
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Appendix E

*Presentation form Capstone Festival*

Raising awareness of good oral health to preschool children

Areli G. Cruz Campos

**Need**

Dental health problems like tooth decay and untreated cavities are common among preschoolers but even more in how income families.

- The lack of knowledge about the importance of oral health
- The low oral health literacy by their primary caregivers
- The lack of access for dental health
- The high consumption of added sugar products.
Theory Application

Bandura's social learning theory states that an individual learns a behavior by observing others and this is called modeling (Bandura, 1977).

What-Where-Who

- A three-day lesson on how to maintain good oral health
- At the Pajaro Valley Unified School District/Child development Center-Linskott state preschool in Watsonville, California.
- 17-21 preschoolers participated

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the project participants will be able to:

1. Describe two reasons why it is important to maintain good oral care.

2. Demonstrate how to brush their teeth correctly.

3. Identify three habits that help them to keep their teeth and gums healthy.
## Methods

### Day 1

I read a book called brushing teeth. Using pictures I explained to the participants what is a cavity. Then I asked them why it is important to brush teeth.

![Image of a book](image1)

![Image of a chart](image2)

### Day 2

I did a science experiment with two eggs, two glasses, water, and soda. I performed a puppet show and together sang a brushing song. Using a teeth model I showed to the participants how to brush teeth correctly. Participants also, did a prediction activity.

![Images of eggs, glasses, and puppets](image3)

### Day 3

I read a book I made about habits to keep teeth and gums healthy. Then I asked participants what are they going to do to keep their teeth and gums healthy. Participants did a unhealthy and healthy foods classification activity. And as a closure activity I hand out bags with toothbrush and toothpaste to each one of the participants.

![Images of a book, toothbrushes, and toothpaste](image4)
Results

- The first learning outcome was meet to some extent. Not everyone had a chance to share their responses but those who did said “because your teeth fall out” and “because you get cavities”.

Learning outcome 1 evidence
The second learning outcome was successfully meet everybody had a chance to demonstrate and practice their abilities brushing teeth model and egg. Also, all the participants enjoyed the puppet show and everyone did a great prediction activity.
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The third learning outcome was met because participants were able to mention two or more practices to keep their teeth and gums healthy. And they successfully classify healthy and unhealthy foods for their teeth.
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Discussion

I think this project was more successful better than I expected.

What would I do differently?

- Prepare myself better by developing techniques to capture children's attention when reading.
- Plan more interactive and creative activities so participants might find the content more interesting and fun.