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Parent and Child Cookbook for Parental Involvement

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Abstract

The agency with the internship opportunity is the Greenfield Branch Library. The purpose of this capstone project is to address the problem of lack of parental involvement. The lack of parental involvement in the community could have major consequences like low academic achievement, low literacy rates, and childhood obesity. The project is a cookbook with healthy recipes consisting of both meals and snacks. The recipes are made specifically for children to be able to make with their parents. The capstone project is a 6 week program. Every Wednesday there is a grab and go bag with a copy of a healthy recipe along with the necessary ingredients. The findings of the capstone project show that it was successful. These findings are based on voluntary surveys that were given. The surveys show that parents and children did participate together in making the recipes provided. The cookbook is recommended also to encourage healthy eating thus reducing the chance of childhood obesity. It is also recommended as a tool to help improve literacy rates.

Keywords: parental involvement, cookbook, healthy meals

Agency & Communities Served

Greenfield Branch Library is an agency part of the Monterey County Free Libraries. The Monterey County Free libraries includes all libraries in Monterey County, seventeen total. Monterey County has a population of over 415,000 which includes almost 121,000 children under the age of 18 (MCFL, 2020). The mission of the Monterey County Free libraries is to bring ideas, inspiration, information, and enjoyment to the community (MCFL, 2021).

When looking at Greenfield, CA specifically, their population is estimated to be 17, 516 in 2019 (Census, 2019). A majority of the population is Hispanic or Latino, 91.1% (Census, 2019). This means that in the immediate area the Greenfield Library mostly serves Hispanic or Latinos. Although the area is mainly Hispanic or Latino the library serves all demographics. In fact the library does not just serve Greenfield specifically but any member of the Monterey County community.

The Monterey County Free Libraries offer a variety of programs. A program that I am assigned to is the Parent-Child Workshops. In this program I take the role of the Family Place Coordinator. My main responsibilities are to connect families to resources and services while also providing a safe and fun learning environment for the children. Traditionally, these workshops would be happening in person in the library. The library has a specific designated area that allows for the child to either play or read while the parent is learning about resources and library services. Due to covid, the Parent-Child Workshops have been impacted, like many other programs.

Problem Description

One current problem in Greenfield is lack of parental involvement. This has been especially apparent during the COVID 19 pandemic. The Greenfield Branch Library has been closed since March of 2020, about a year. In this year the library has had to resort to providing as many services as they can remotely. Parents and children have also had to resort to completing many things online. By relying heavily on technology, both parents and children have moved away from completing things together. Children are left to learn through their computer and the parents are not as present as they would be.

Contributing Factors

One possible contributing factor is the location and lack of resources or hardships. A computer is an expensive item. It is not uncommon for many households not to have a computer. This could be because some households do not have the financial resources to buy a computer. It is also possible that households with computers may not have internet connection also due to financial reasons. Internet connection is another household expense, for some not a primary one. According to the United State Census Bureau, the median household income for Greenfield in 2019 was \$59, 595 (Census, 2019). When analyzing this data it could be concluded that the average person will have financial difficulties in this income bracket. This is especially true when looking at the cost of living in California. It is among one of the most expensive places to live. It can be difficult for families in Greenfield to connect to the resources they need without a computer and internet connection. This is especially true in today's times where everything is mostly technology based, especially in this pandemic. A lot of things have turned to paperless

options, virtual appointments, etc. It would be difficult for parents to increase their involvement with their children if they can not find additional resources.

Another possible contributing factor to the computer and connection problem could be education. For example, during the pandemic a lot of the Greenfield Branch Library Patrons did not connect to services online. This could be because they may not all be proficient in basic computer use. When looking at data, 45.2% of people in Greenfield have a high school education and 5.2% have a bachelor degree or higher (Census, 2019). This factor leads to a lack of parental involvement. If parents are not proficient in computer use it is highly likely that they may not know how to check their child's grades or email their teachers. It is likely that they will shy away from being involved in their child's education if it is technology based.

Greenfield's geographic location also seems to be a factor in lack of computer and internet connectivity. According to the California Interactive Broadband Map, Greenfield has areas that have either slow service or no service at all (CIBM, 2018). Greenfield is not very large in size. This means that there are little resources immediately available in the area. Residents would have to drive to the nearest city for more options. Another example would be parents looking for help and resources for their children and family. There is not much help available in the area that they may just give up trying to increase their involvement with their children.

Consequences

Two consequences of the lack of parental involvement is low academic performance and low literacy rates. According to the California School Dashboard, Greenfield High School shows low academic performance in math. Based on the 2019 report, they are 119.5 points below

standard in math (CSD, 2019). They are also below standard in English Arts, 23.7 points below (CSD, 2019).

Another consequence is a larger education gap. For example, if students attend schools that earn higher test scores than they are more likely to graduate and go to college than other schools. Greenfield High has a graduation rate of 87.7% in comparison to Alisal High which has a graduation rate of 90.4% (CSD, 2019). The graduation rate for Alisal High is slightly larger than Greenfield but they also have higher test scores.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Poor nutrition	The lack of parental involvement.	Low academic performance
Education		Low literacy rates
Location/There is a lack of resources in Greenfield.		Childhood obesity

Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

A possible capstone project would be to build upon and expand connections between parents and children. One way to accomplish this at the Greenfield Branch Library would be by creating a cookbook. The cookbook would include healthy recipes for parents to do with their children. They would be provided in both English and Spanish. The cookbook would include a few healthy snacks and a few healthy meals. The recipes in the cookbook will be simple and with minimal ingredients. The idea is to encourage parent- child interaction as well as to improve

literacy skills. Children could improve their literacy through reading the recipes in the cookbook. This cookbook would be available in the library for community members to access. Copies would be available as needed as well as a virtual copy. This project would require parents to visit the library with their children thus creating more opportunities for the library. This cookbook would support the agency and all the people they serve.

Project Purpose

This project will help address the lack of parental involvement and low literacy rates in the Greenfield community. There is a need for this cookbook because the city of Greenfield is relatively small in size. It's size impacts the amount of resources they have available. This cookbook serves as a resource in multiple ways. Through this project parents and children are connected with a resource on healthy meals. These meals and snacks will help parents and children with their overall nutrition. The cookbook serves as a reader friendly and fun resource. Instead of just a pamphlet or flyer with a lot of information on it, children and parents have the opportunity to have a different type of resource. The cookbook will be at the library. Parents and children have the library as a resource and the cookbook as another resource. Both of these resources are all found in one place. That is another purpose of this project. To help the library become a main resource for multiple things in the community.

Project Justification

The idea of a cookbook for children and parents is beneficial for many reasons. The cookbook is a way for parents and children to improve their literacy skills. According to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, family involvement is related to children's literacy outcomes (Kreider, 2006). A study found that children whose parents read to them recognize

letters of the alphabet sooner than others whose parents do not (Kreider, 2006). If children are recognizing the alphabet sooner then they are more likely to read sooner also. They are also more likely to enjoy reading and continuing reading as they get older. The more a child reads the more they also expand their vocabulary. When children read well they are more likely to have great academic performance in school. They are also more likely to continue their education after high school. The cookbook is another resource for parents to use not only to help their children read but also to learn a life skill. Learning to cook can help the child become more independent. Being independent is another great skill to have as it prepares children for their adult lives. At the same time they will be building their parent-child relationship

Project Implementation

The cookbook will be implemented through a few different methods. The first step is to start the implementation through existing library patrons and staff. It is more likely that existing library patrons will participate in the start up of the project. In this way, the focus is solely on starting up the cookbook and encouraging participation. This method would require communication to library patrons. The best way to do this would be to make phone calls or send emails as a promotion to the cookbook. Another step in the implementation plan is to promote the cookbook through the use of flyers. The flyers would be put up outside the library doors. They would also be given out on days where the library distributes lunch. Anyone that comes to pick up lunch will be given a flyer. of. The idea of the implementation process is just to advertise the cookbook and get as many people in the library the day the project is implemented. There are 25 bags with recipes in each bag and they should all be distributed. “A detailed implementation plan and timeline can be seen in the Scope of Work in Appendix A.”

Assessment Plan

In order to measure effectiveness, one plan is to use social media platforms. The library's social media will be used to promote the program, help evaluate the program, and receive feedback. By using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube we will be able to see exactly how many participants are active. These platforms will show the number of views the cookbook video has. Based on the number of views, we can evaluate the number of participants there and if more could be done. Another way to measure the effectiveness of the cookbook is by keeping track of the amount of copies there are. For example, there could be 25 copies of the cookbook and if all are picked up then we can infer that people were interested.

Post surveys could also be used as an assessment tool. The surveys would be both a printed hard copy. The post survey would assess how well the parent and child liked the cookbook and if they would participate again. It would also ask if they were able to make the recipes with their child. Each person that takes a bag would be given a survey. The goal is to receive all the surveys back in order to help assess the success of the project.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcome of this project is to increase parental involvement. If the outcome turns out as it should, parents will become more involved with their children. The idea is that they start with one simple activity such as the cookbook and then continue on. The cookbook should work as a starting point. The outcome should lead to both parents and children wanting to do more activities together. That is where the use of the library will come in. The cookbook will be a tool to help bring parents and children to the library. Once parents and children are at the library there are many opportunities. It is an opportunity for parents and children to learn of new

activities to do together. It is an opportunity for parents and children to read together as well as connect to other resources and services they need. These outcomes will benefit the children, parents, and the library.

Project Results

As a result of the project parental involvement increased. The cookbook served as a fun tool for parents to do with their children promoting parental involvement, good nutrition, and improving literacy skills. This was achieved by having only healthy meals and snacks in the cookbook. The recipes were also both in English and Spanish with minimal ingredients. A majority of the recipes only had three ingredients. Providing recipes with minimal ingredients made it so that the cook/ prep time was very short. This was a way to help ensure parents would complete the recipe with their child and not take much of their busy day. The cookbook was introduced as a 6 week program. Every Wednesday for 6 weeks library patrons would receive one grab and go bag. This grab and go bag included one healthy recipe per week along with all necessary ingredients. There were a total of 25 grab and go bags made. Along with the 25 grab and go bags each patron taking a bag was given a survey. There were 25 surveys given each week for 6 weeks. The results were based on the number of copies printed and distributed. The survey asked things like how well they liked the cookbook, were they able to do any of the recipes with their children, and what would they like improved. Out of the surveys received every week the results show that parents were able to make the recipes with their children, thus increasing parental involvement. They also made comments saying they loved the recipes. The following table shows the survey results. In the future the cookbook could be improved to include different recipes as well as workshops.

Weeks/ Recipes	Surveys/ Bags Given	Surveys Received
1 Peanut Butter Banana Roll Up	25	7
2 Applesauce Oatmeal	25	6
3 Ants on a Log	25	13
4 Spinach Quesadilla	25	4
5 Avocado Toast	25	6
6 Tuna Sandwich	25	8

Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion the capstone project was successful but there are recommendations that could be made to help the agency. Through the results of the project, parents stated they enjoyed creating the recipes with their children. Therefore, since they liked the activity one recommendation would be to continue the idea and incorporate the promotion of healthy meals throughout the year. This could be done by providing one healthy meal or snack once a month. If this is done once a month for a year that will total 12 healthy meals or snacks thus impacting the community and reducing child obesity and malnutrition. In addition, the library could also begin a physical activity program or class. This could also take place once a month outside the library.

It could be something along the lines of a zumba class or yoga. If once a month seems a little too difficult then it could also work a few times a year. For example once in the beginning of the year and once in the end. The main recommendation is just to continue the program at some point or to improve or expand it.

Personal Reflection

Overall, I really enjoyed working on my capstone project. I learned a lot about the problems the community faces with lack of parental involvement as well as low literacy rates. I noticed that the lack of parental involvement is important and it needs to be more widely acknowledged. It is important for parents to be involved with their children in different ways. There are many benefits when it comes to increasing parental involvement. I learned that with a little help, like the cookbook, parents have an easier time incorporating their children in an activity. Sometimes, it may be hard to engage children in certain activities or parents may not have a lot of time on their hands to plan on their own. The cookbook was a fast and simple way to have parents be involved with their children as well as making a healthy meal or snack.

I think what helped the success of my capstone project was the fact that I was able to provide the necessary ingredients for all the recipes at no cost to the population served. It would have been difficult for parents to try making the recipes with their children if they did not have the necessary ingredients at home. It may have also been an inconvenience or an extra expense, especially in rough times during a pandemic. Being able to provide all the necessary ingredients made it easier for parents to follow through with the recipe with their children thus increasing parental involvement. It also helped parents provide their children with either a meal or snack.

Although I was happy with my capstone project and its results there were some challenges. One challenge was limiting the ingredients in the cookbook. The recipes and snacks consisted of only 3 ingredients. The recipes had limited ingredients to help ensure that they were quick and simple. This limited the types of recipes that I could incorporate into the cookbook. If the recipes consisted of more ingredients I could have included more variety. Even though I had to limit ingredients in the recipes this helped address the challenge of providing all the ingredients. I needed to ensure that I had enough ingredients for 25 people. By having 3 ingredients I was able to provide all the ingredients at little or no cost.

I think my project relates to and helped address the social problem of child obesity and malnutrition. Although the project's main purpose was to increase parental involvement it helped these areas in a small way. It helped promote healthy eating by providing recipes with healthy alternatives. Every recipe provided had the healthiest ingredients possible. For example, one recipe was spinach quesadillas. The tortilla in this recipe was whole wheat, the cheese was reduced fat, and the spinach was organic. Overall, a total of 150 meals/snacks were given over the course of 6 weeks. That means at least 150 people including children chose a healthy alternative that week therefore reducing the chance of eating unhealthy food.

Beyond what my project was able to accomplish, there is more that could be done to address this social problem. This includes being involved with local schools. Children spend a majority of their time in school. This is the best time to try and connect with them to make any change. Most schools already provide healthy alternatives in their lunches but there is more that can be improved. For example, schools could create programs throughout the school year targeting healthy eating and physical activity.

Originally, my role at the agency was the family place coordinator. In that role my responsibility was to hold workshops for parents and children to connect them to services as well as provide them with activities to do in the workshop. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, my role was impacted and I was not able to carry out my original duties. Therefore, my advice to future capstone students working in this agency, based on my experience, would be to just enjoy the experience. The library is a great place to intern and it really opens your eyes to see just how great of a resource the library is. I used to just think the library was just a resource for books and computer use. I now have learned the many benefits and resources the library has for the community. I advise interns to learn as much as they can about the library while they are there.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research recipes - Create recipe book - Print recipe book - Create flyers - Print flyers - Distribute flyers - Make calls and emails to library patrons - create surveys - - - - - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of local schools - List of library patron contacts - Promotional flyers - List of possible sponsors - List of survey questions - - - - - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May 24 Decide recipes - May 31 create recipe book - June 7 print recipe book - June 14 create flyers - June 21 print/ distribute - June 28 make calls - July 5 Decide survey ?'s - - - - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency staff - Mentor - Greenfield school districts - Local food drives - - - - - -