



NutriNet News

Network Will Promote Learner Centered Approaches to Education in 2007-2010

Learner Centered Approaches to education are techniques that build learner involvement and engagement into an active learning process. The purpose of using a Learner Centered Approach is to build self-efficacy and to develop meaningful intentions so that the learner can use new knowledge and skills in the context of improved health/nutrition behavior.

— Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network, 2006

Overview of Learner Centered Approaches to Nutrition Education

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network Steering Committee requested an overview training for committee members and other opinion leaders at the county and local levels to clarify the principles of Learner Centered Approaches (LCA) and what LCA will mean to the Network and their agencies. This training was conducted on August 25, 2006 at the UW-Madison Memorial Union and was attended by 27 state, county and local partners. Partners represented UW-Extension, DHFS, WIC, DPI, Ho-Chunk Nation, and Great Lakes Intertribal Council.

The session began with an introduction and summary of the Network's Logic Model plan for 2007-2010 by Patti Herrick of DHFS. Next, Betsy Kelley led the group in reflecting on effective learning experiences and discussing aspects of their experiences that were learner centered. Susan Nitzke of the UW-Madison

Department of Nutritional Sciences/UW-Extension reviewed behavior change theory and its relationship to LCA.

Three learner centered teaching techniques were demonstrated—Facilitated Dialogue, Motivational Negotiation and Experiential Learning.

What Does Your Agency Need (or Need to do) to Implement Effective Learner Centered Approaches?

This was the question asked by Connie Welch of DHFS and Mary Jane Getlinger of WNEN. The steering committee is considering how to address the following suggestions from participants.

- Bilingual information—materials and training
- Wisline for educators to discuss experiences, share good examples
- Training to focus on age group variations
- Money for staff resources, mileage, etc

- Fully engage more Network partners in LCA
- Training for staff at agencies—practice with peers, observe skills in action
- Support skill development and self efficacy with follow-up
- Outcome and evaluation tools
- Positive support from State staff
- Bring an expert to increase LCA skills of key partner staff members
- Institutionalize LCA through education, tech support, monitoring in all aspects of WIC, Public Health, Adult and Youth Education

Evaluation comments following this overview training indicated that participants were familiar with the theory of learner-centered approaches and would like more time for planning how to integrate LCA in their agency's work.

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network

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What's Next in Implementing Learner Centered Approaches?

Facilitated Dialogue Training

Facilitated Dialogue Training will be presented by members of the Eating Well Being Active Family Living Team at district meetings. This training will help participants learn and practice strategies used in facilitated dialogue and incorporate learner-centered techniques into existing teaching resources. Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program Coordinators are encouraged to invite agency partners. Session dates are:

- February 22 (10am-3pm), Racine (262-635-6824)
- March 21 (9:30am-2:30pm) Green Bay (920-388-7197)
- April 10 Hurley (715-349-2151)
- May 15 Eau Claire (715-839-6277)
- May 16 Central District TBA (715-346-2760)
- May 17 (10am-3pm) Darlington 608-935-3024

LCA to be featured at 2008 WIC/UWExtension Conference

The Network has made preliminary plans for a training on Learner Centered Approaches in conjunction with a joint WIC and WNEP annual conferences in 2008. Plans will be discussed at the next Network Steering Committee meeting on May 14. Stay tuned as plans unfold.



New Curriculum "Vary Your Veggies—Tips for Busy Parents" Uses Learner Centered Techniques

Nutrition education is most effective when there is an open, interactive communication between the learner and the educator and when the session focuses on issues that are relevant to the learner and solutions that the learner is able to implement. Based on these principles, the Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa State University developed a series of 42 nutrition education modules focused on increasing young children's intake of vegetables. The lessons in "Vary Your Veggies: Tips for Busy Parents" are designed to help caregivers and parents encourage their children to eat vegetables. The development of each module was based on the transtheoretical model (TTM) of behavior change, which addresses an individual's readiness to change or adopt positive behaviors. The stage of change construct of the transtheoretical model asserts behavior change proceeds over time, in a non-linear fashion, through six stages:

1. *Precontemplation*: the individual has no intention of making behavior change in the next 6 months.
2. *Contemplation*: the individual is aware of problem behavior and considering change in the next 6 months.
3. *Preparation*: the individual intends and plans to change behavior in next 6 months.
4. *Action*: the individual is actively modifying their behavior.
5. *Maintenance*: the individual no longer engages in problem behavior and is working to avoid relapse.
6. *Termination*: the individual is no longer tempted to regress or relapse to problem behavior.

A study in Wisconsin and nine other states showed that most low-income young adults are in a pre-action stage (pre-contemplation, contemplation, or preparation), for eating three or more servings of vegetables a day. (Nitzke S, Kritsch K, Boeckner L et al. *Am J Health Promot*, in press). In these early stages individuals tend to focus on the barriers to change. As they progress to the action and maintenance stages, their focus shifts to the benefits. TTM predicts that interventions tailored to an individual's stage of change will help them succeed in making positive health-related behavior changes. Additionally, "Vary Your Veggies" uses a learner-centered approach, which allows the learner to decide which barrier to discuss with the nutrition educator, and whether or not they would like to take available handout(s) or engage in the take-home activities.

Interventions tailored to an individual's stage of change will help them succeed in making positive health-related behavior changes.

"Vary Your Veggies" lessons were designed as stand-alone lessons to be used in WIC clinics, or similar settings in which the learner and nutrition educator have brief encounters. The possibility exists, however, to treat "Vary Your Veggies" as a curriculum, allowing the learner to address multiple barriers to increasing vegetable consumption, while they progress through the stages of change.

Wisconsin Adaptations and Pilot

During fall of 2006 and winter of 2007 Extension educators in four counties (Burnett, Portage, Waukesha and Winnebago) pilot tested the adapted lessons from Iowa's curriculum. After further revision "Vary Your Veggies" will be released for widespread use in Wisconsin.

Educators followed four steps to provide personalized lessons to primary caregivers. Lessons are aimed at increasing the variety and amount of vegetables consumed by children ages 2 through 5 years.

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Stepping Up Campaign Wraps Up Successful Second Year

During 2005-2006, the second year of the *Stepping Up to a Healthy Lifestyle* campaign, WNEP educators and partners made 25,867 direct educational contacts with FoodShare eligible Wisconsin residents. Fifty-seven percent (14,836) were made by WNEP educators. 96,675 indirect contacts were made by means of newsletters and unattended displays, with an additional 40,000 reached through radio or television. 182 partners, including 40 from UWExtension Family Living Programs, conducted the campaign in 53 counties.



Educational activities targeted six age groups: youth age 8-11, youth age 12-17, adults age 18-64 without children, pregnant women/caregivers of infants, families with children, and older adults. WNEP families with children received

the greatest number of contacts (7252 or 49%) followed by youth age 8-11 (3463, 23%) and older adults (2106, 14%).

Educational materials provided for the 2006 campaign were updated to reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid Food Guidance System.

Several new lessons and displays were developed for 2006. A total of 20 lesson plans and accompanying handouts in English and Spanish and four related displays were made available on the Network website. *Stepping Up Lessons* were designed to be easily adapted for different educational settings (one-time group, multi-session group, individual learner, learn while you wait). A measuring cup was provided as an incentive for participants completing the lesson "How Much Should I Eat?"

Evaluation items were provided for each lesson topic. Retrospective post-then-pre design was used to ask learners about their behavior before the educational activity and their intended behavior following the activity. Three answer options were provided: "yes, often," "yes, sometimes" and "no." For all 15 items provided with the 2006 lesson plans,

65% of respondents said they would perform the desired behavior "often" after the lesson, compared with 39% who said they performed the behavior "often" before the lesson. In 2005, 9 items were compiled and 69% of participants said they would perform the desired behavior more often after the lesson compared to 43% who said they practiced the behavior before the lesson.

Impact Statements

One way to investigate behavior change is to look at the increase in the number of individuals who say they intend to practice a desired behavior "often" after an educational contact. *Stepping Up* evaluation data from age groups (teens through seniors) and all teaching situations were combined. The greatest change in the number of participants responding "yes, often" was for the question about being active in all kinds of weather (13%, n=9 before, 60%, n=40 after), and paying attention to the amount of food needed from each food group (24%, n=642 before, 60%, n=1260 after). Three other lessons also were indicators of positive change.

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What's Next in Implementing Learner Centered Approaches? (Continued)

- Using a simple screening tool, educators assessed the caregivers' readiness to offer recommended amounts of vegetables to their child (referred to as the "Stage of Change.")
- Next, they identified a barrier to providing more vegetables to their child.
- Educators determined the learner's stage of readiness from the screening tool and selected the corresponding lesson for that learner's stage and barrier(s). A more general lesson was used when the learner's barriers did not correspond to the screening tool.
- Educators asked an evaluation question at the end of each lesson, and filled out an evaluation/data sheet.

"Vary Your Veggies: Tips for Busy Parents" aims to provide caregivers with the necessary tools to increase the amount and variety of vegetables they offer their children. By using basic nutrition education resources such as MyPyramid posters, food models, and food preparation equipment, start-up costs for the curriculum are minimal. The actual cost to teach each lesson varies as some involve optional food preparation and/or educational incentives or reinforcing items. Samples of all handouts and some incentive items (stickers, measuring cups) are provided with the kit and sites can order more as needed.

Lessons are designed to be delivered in approximately 7 to 15 minutes, not in-

cluding time involved in food preparation. Additional time may also be required for the three lessons that actively involve both the caregiver and child with the use of a children's book.



"Vary Your Veggies: Tips for Busy Parents" will be released in the fall of 2007 as a new opportunity to meet learners where they are at in the behavior process. Watch for information about training and partnering for this exciting effort to help families eat more vegetables.

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network

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Our Mission:

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network facilitates collaborative planning of nutrition education programs at the state and local levels. We promote healthful and enjoyable eating so that Wisconsin's low income individuals and families receive consistent, positive, relevant, accurate, and effective nutrition messages.

Nutri-Net News is available on the web or by email.

Stepping Up Campaign Wraps Up Successful Second Year (Continued)

Another way to investigate behavior change is to look at the number of individuals who say they do not intend to practice a desired behavior after an educational contact. The greatest change in the number of participants responding "no" was for the question about choosing lower calorie foods (46% n=1054 before, 23% n=511 after) followed by choosing healthy snacks (40% n=894 before, 18% n=408 after) and looking for good buys for fruits and vegetables (35% n=39 before, 13% n=13 after). Fewer participants responding "no" after the lesson means that more of the participants intend to practice the behavior often or sometimes. These lessons can be considered effective in promoting intent to change behavior.

In spite of these successes, some learners remained unmotivated to change. Some of these learners may be reached by more personalized and comprehensive educational interventions. After a *Stepping Up* lesson, 35% of participants said they do not intend to eat 3 or more cups of vegetables each day; 31% do not intend to eat 2 cups of fruit each day; and 30% will not pay more attention to the amount of food they are eating from food groups.

WNEP families with children received the greatest number of contacts.

Evaluation items for some lessons showed a large number of participants practiced the desired behavior sometimes or often before the lesson. These included: eating foods with fiber (93% often or sometimes), eating foods with calcium (92% often or sometimes), limiting time in front of the screen (80% often or sometimes) and looking for inexpensive ways to be active (75% often or sometimes). While there is always room for improvement in the number participants who perform the behaviors "often" compared to "sometimes," our evaluation may not be sufficient to capture these changes.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions for the Program

Although we made small changes in the lesson plans and clarified evaluation answer choices for 2006, overall change measured by the retrospective post-then-pre evaluation items was consistent between the two years of the campaign.

Thus evaluation format appeared to be sufficient and the campaign materials were effective in promoting intention to change nutrition and physical activity behavior.

Although a variety of *Stepping Up* topics were available, the topics most commonly taught were the most basic: portion size, fruits and vegetables, calcium and grains/fiber. However, a large number of participants reported eating the recommended amounts of these foods before the lesson either "sometimes" or "often." Different lessons may be needed to meet nutrition education needs of these learners.

The number of counties and partners participating in the campaign was similar for the two years of the campaign and greater than past campaigns. Partners continue to report that the campaigns strengthen their partnering relationships and look forward to "what's new" each year. This aspect of the Network's role in promoting nutrition education in the counties will be considered in future planning.

Instead of developing a new campaign, the Network will emphasize learner-centered approaches to nutrition education and will work with partner agencies to provide training and materials that facilitate a learner-centered approach in 2007-2010. As materials are identified and adapted to accomplish the Network's LCA goals, they will be disseminated to Network partners.

