

Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story



Piloting Asynchronous Direct Nutrition Education Classes

Program

In efforts to increase class participation and provide parents with the flexibility to participate in nutrition education classes at a day and time convenient to them, Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA) piloted a new model of self-paced, self-guided nutrition education classes to parents in schools via Nearpod.

Background

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) partnered with Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA) to provide nutrition and physical activity education in schools, parks, and community-based settings. SEE-LA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to build sustainable food systems by working with small/mid-sized farms and local small businesses at their various farmers market locations and promote social and cultural activities by coordinating programs such as their *Pompea Smith Good Cooking Buena Cocina Nutrition Education Program*.

SEE-LA worked with a DPH-identified and funded partner, Lawndale Elementary School District (LESD), to conduct nutrition education for parents at LESD. Due to ongoing COVID-19 precautions in the school setting, nutrition education for parents at LESD remained primarily virtual for the 2021-2022 school year. In an effort to connect to a wider audience of LESD parents and provide them the flexibility to attend nutrition classes at times convenient to them and their families, SEE-LA pilot tested the use of self-paced or asynchronous nutrition education classes via Nearpod. Nearpod is a platform that allows educators to build a self-guided and self-paced nutrition class which can be accessed via a shareable link, and no phone/tablet application required.

Two asynchronous lessons were developed and launched in May of 2022 for Billy Mitchell Elementary school parents. The Nutrition 5 Class Series' Rethink your Drink lesson, created by the Orange County Health Care Agency, was adapted to a video

delivery format that included all components of a live or in-person nutrition class. Two self-paced lessons, an English and Spanish lesson, were pilot tested to appeal to parents' preferred language. The platform enabled tracking of program participants and their demographics via post-session reports, provide downloadable nutrition class handouts, recipe cards, and included CalFresh Healthy Living signage such as the *Justice for All Poster*. Participants were continually engaged during the lesson via poll questions that were integrated in the Nearpod lesson as quick knowledge checks to evaluate understanding of key lesson components. The video portion of the lesson incorporated a health educator-led pre-recorded video lesson and Rethink Your Drink demonstration to tie it all together. A total of 8 participants took the Nearpod Rethink your Drink lessons, over the one-month pilot period.

Body

THE NEED: Challenge

Parent nutrition education classes and food demonstrations during the 2021-2022 school year were primarily conducted via Zoom with a live health educator. Despite classes being offered in the mornings and evenings, Zoom class participation remained relatively low, with an average of three participants per class. Informal surveying of past program participants revealed that parents were interested in classes but were unable to attend due to work schedule conflicts, other family priorities after school, and feeling uncomfortable with using the Zoom platform. In an effort to improve class participation and engage a new cohort of LESD parents, SEE-LA was granted approval by Orange County Health Care Agency to pilot test self-paced lessons via Nearpod.

THE WORK: Solution

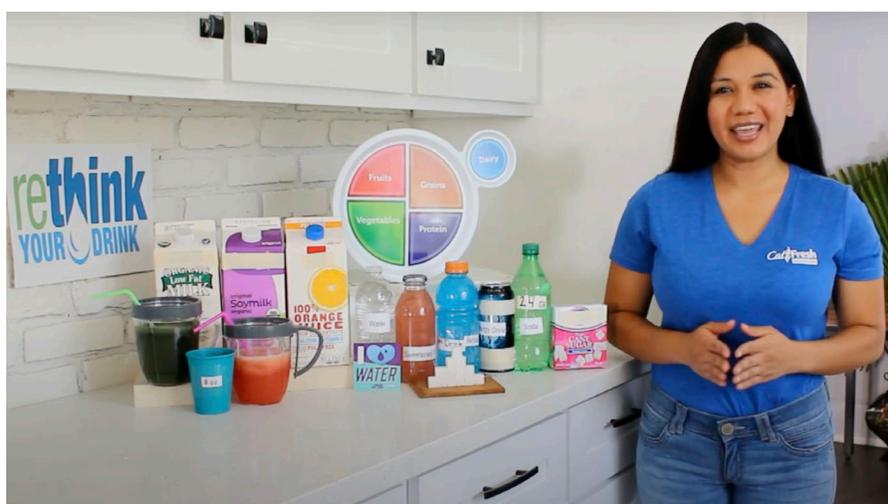
SEE-LA's aim was to engage a new cohort of parents with nutrition education that could be accessed at any time of day to provide parents with the flexibility to participate in nutrition education classes when and where they felt the most comfortable. Additionally, SEE-LA wanted to ensure that the asynchronous lessons provided as close to an in-person or virtual experience as possible, while also adhering to CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) grant reporting and data collection requirements.

Asynchronous classes were conducted using an approved CFHL single-session curriculum, Nutrition 5 Class Series for the pilot lessons. Nearpod's post-session reports enabled staff to track program participants and their demographic data for reporting. To ensure that participants completed the lesson in its entirety, skipping ahead was disabled and knowledge checks through embedded multiple-choice questions were incorporated throughout the lesson to evaluate learning. Parents also had the ability to either download class handouts or screen shot handouts to utilize throughout the lesson. In addition to the Nearpod lessons, food demonstration videos were created using CFHL funds which are also available on SEE-LA's *Psbuenacocina's* YouTube channel. While not required, videos on YouTube made developing the self-paced classes an easier experience.

SEE-LA staff worked with LESD staff and Medi-Cal Outreach Specialists to create a promotion strategy that targeted a single school site, Billy Mitchell Elementary. Promotional efforts included distributing class flyers, sending a weekly newsletter blast to parents, and sending a text message invitation – all of which included the class link for easy access. Billy Mitchell was selected based on its history of high parent engagement and participation in past nutrition education classes. Due to delays in finalizing the Nearpod lessons and seeking the curriculum developer approval, the self-paced classes were promoted during the last month of the school year which coincided with the time in which parents tend to be less engaged and where there is a significant drop-off in nutrition class participation. Despite the challenge, SEE-LA successfully saw the new model of direct nutrition education to have a higher participation rate than the Zoom nutrition education class offerings.

THE IMPACT: Results

Two lessons were offered from May 2022 to June 2022. A total of 8 participants participated in the pilot test. Self-paced class participation showed a 17.6% increase in participation when compared to virtual nutrition education classes offered over Zoom to LESD parents during the 2021-2022 school year. Approximately 50% of class participants were able to complete the entire lesson in its entirety, while the other 50% were able to complete the lesson to various points within the class. Although participation was not overwhelmingly higher than virtual Zoom class offerings, end of year roll-out presented a significant challenge, staff discovered that self-paced classes are an innovative model worthy of a second pilot test.



Pictured, SEE-LA's Health Educator delivering Rethink your Drink self-paced lessons.

Sustaining Success:

SEE-LA will conduct a second pilot test of asynchronous classes during the 2022-2023 school year and is actively working on creating nutrition education videos and food demonstrations that can support these efforts. LESD staff will now be able to help promote self-paced classes more strategically and with ample running time during the beginning of the school year. Although SEE-LA is currently moving towards in-person classes at schools, both SEE-LA and LESD staff are excited to add self-paced prerecorded classes as an alternative way to offer nutrition education classes to parents. Participants are now accessing information using technology in new ways via social media, and self-paced lessons are in line with that trajectory; providing parents with the flexibility to participate in nutrition education programming at a time that is most convenient to them. In the future, it would also be helpful if additional curriculum developers would be open adapting nutrition education lessons to a video format that can be included in more asynchronous lessons or courses. Additionally, having more SNAP-Ed curricula that can be adapted or is specifically tailored to virtual delivery will enable funded partners to continue to provide high quality nutrition education in new ways that people can enjoy, and feel comfortable participating in.

Favorite Quote

“I really liked the video/self-guided format! It is beneficial to be able to go back to revisit something or pause as needed.” – anonymous participant

“The lesson [was] good, informative, and [included a] easy recipe to prepare at home.” – anonymous participant

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