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Circle Time Health Curriculum Designed for Pre-Schoolers

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Introduction

- Ensuring the physical, social, and mental health of young children necessitates access to and active involvement in regular well-child doctor visits[1].
- Over 20% of low-income, Head Start eligible children in Chittenden County are not up-to-date on regular exams (J. Fink, personal communication, December 5, 2013).
- Barriers to active cooperation from parents and children in health care include a lack of familiarity and comfort with what occurs in well-child visits[2].
- Working in conjunction with Champlain Valley Head Start, we set out to implement a curriculum for primarily low-income children ages 3-5 throughout Chittenden County geared at familiarizing children with what goes on in annual doctor check-ups.

Methods

- Circle Time curriculum was developed based on best practice in the literature for pre-K curriculum[3] and observation of Tooth Tutor curriculum[4].
- The curriculum involved medical students presenting hands-on with prop medical devices to teach children their intended use. Ten (10) out of 15 classrooms in Chittenden County received it. The tools were selected to demonstrate a standard well child visit. Surveys were distributed in all 10 classrooms to all teachers both before and after the Circle Times were performed.
- Surveys looked at both quantitative changes to children's attitudes (perceived by teachers) and qualitative feedback from the teachers.
- Results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Survey responses were numerically categorized (strongly disagree = 0, disagree = 1, agree = 2, strongly agree = 3). Responses from each classroom were averaged together.

Results

Demographic	Percent of VT Head Start Pre-schoolers
Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	4%
Indian Alaskan	1%
Asian	8%
Black	13%
White	65%
Bi/Multi-racial	8%
Primary language in home not English	24%
Households receiving TANF benefits	67%

Figure 1. Demographics of the children enrolled in the Champlain Valley Head Start Program

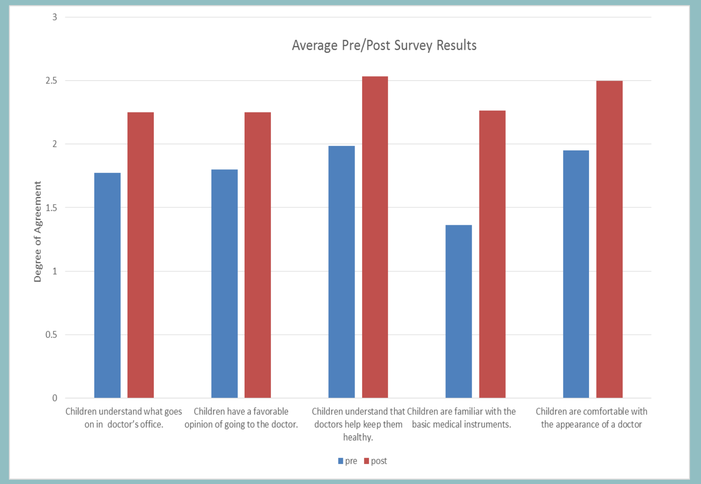

Figure 2. Comparison of Pre and Post Circle Time Survey Results as assessed by Champlain Valley Head Start Teachers

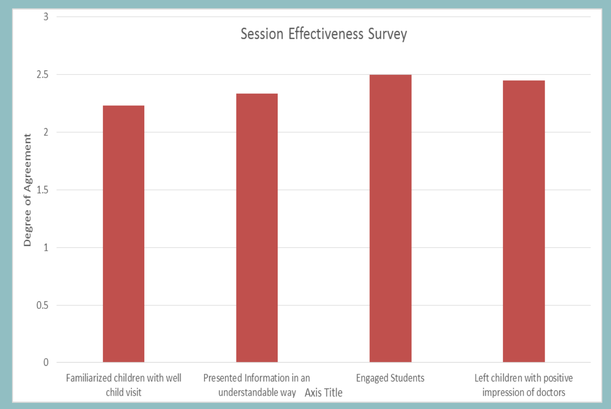

Figure 3. Assessment of Circle Time Effectiveness by the Champlain Valley Head Start Teachers

Figure 4. Images taken from the Circle Time provided at Ira Allen PM Pre-school.

Results

- According to the majority of classroom teachers, the Circle Time curriculum that we developed improved children's understanding of what goes on in the well child exam, including their overall opinion of the doctor, the importance of preventive medicine, and the appearance of doctors and the tools that they use (Figure 2).
- There were, however, certain areas in which we could improve (Figure 3).The most common suggestions for improvement were to use books, songs, and games to communicate more effectively with our young audience.

Discussion/Conclusion

- Our Circle Time curriculum appears to have achieved its desired outcomes in terms of improving children's understanding of well child exams.
- While teachers reported improvements in children's comfort and knowledge, some still stated that they felt the curriculum was not as effective as it could have been.
- From these responses, we identified a need to clarify our survey questions, alter our curriculum to make it more accessible and engaging for our young audience, and potentially tailor part of the curriculum to meet the needs of the ESL student population.
- Overall, this project provides a strong foundation on which to build further Circle Time curricula that can be used to improve the prevalence of well child care among Head Start children.

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