

**Families Are Munching
Peer Mentor Pilot Evaluation Summary
Spring 2004**

Produced by the Families Are Munching Steering Committee
Spring 2004

Families Are Munching Peer Mentor Pilot

Background

In the spring of 2004 two schools in Burlington participated in a Grade 8 peer mentor pilot project, as part of the Families Are Munching program (FAM). FAM is a program geared to elementary school aged children to encourage them to eat more vegetables and fruit on a daily basis. The pilot was developed as the result of a decreased engagement in the FAM program among students in grades 7 and 8. For example, students felt too old to participate in the daily tracking of their consumption of vegetables and fruit. Research has suggested that peer mentoring is an effective way to engage youth in health issues.

Two schools in Burlington were chosen for the pilot as they had an active school champion, and a Public Health Nurse(PHN) able to assist with the pilot.

Summary of the Peer Mentor Pilot

The purpose of the peer mentor program is to encourage Grade 7 or 8 students to increase their consumption of vegetables and fruit daily as a result of creating and implementing a classroom presentation for students in JK to Grade 6 to encourage them to eat more vegetables and fruit daily.

A total of 18 peer mentors participated in the program, 13 in one school and 5 in the other. At one school, peer mentors that participated were already an established leadership group in the school. At the other school, peer mentors selected were described as "quiet students who were highly capable but not usually involved in high profile school activities." Peer mentors were selected by the school champion with input from school staff.

To launch the program the peer mentors received the Families Are Munching Grade 7/8 classroom presentation by a FAM volunteer. The peer mentors then met with a FAM volunteer, the school champion and the PHN to review the purpose of the pilot. Peer mentors were requested to think about how they could encourage younger students to eat more vegetables and fruit by delivering a classroom presentation and implementing school activities. They were given one week to prepare and then met again with the FAM volunteer, school champion etc. to

review their ideas. Presentations by peer mentors to JK to Grade 6 students took place the following week.

Presentations provided by the peer mentors were evaluated by the teachers. The peer mentors also provided feedback about the peer mentor process and the impact the program had on their consumption of vegetables and fruit and feelings about their school. Results are presented below.

Peer Mentor Results

All of the peer mentors indicated that they enjoyed being a peer mentor and felt comfortable doing the classroom presentation. 94% of peer mentors indicated that they were much more aware of what the recommendations were for eating vegetables and fruit, and 88% were more aware of how many vegetables and fruit they ate everyday. 83% of peer mentors indicated that they increased the amounts of vegetables and fruit they ate every day as a result of participating in the program. 65% of peer mentors indicated that being a peer mentor changed how they felt about their school.

Teacher Results

82% of teachers rated the overall presentation given by peer mentors as very good. 94% indicated that the message of eating 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit daily was very clear in the presentations given by peer mentors and that the students being presented to were engaged.

Peer Mentor Comments

"I think we did great and all the kids listened very well and promised they would do what we said".

"I've always wanted to be someone the kids looked up to, now that I am, I feel important and want to do better for their benefit".

"Example is not the main thing when influencing other, it is the only thing".

"I feel more like an example to younger kids".

"I feel I have a part to play in this school".

"I've started eating a bit healthier and exercising more since I've started encouraging others (to eat more vegetables and fruit)".

"I think that being a peer mentor has changed how I feel about school because I'm a role model and the little kids look up to me about different things".

Teacher Comments

"The girls presented enthusiastically. The program was terrific. The parents and children need to be aware of what the children are eating".

"Great job girls! The class had a fun time and learned a lot about nutrition. It is very important for children to learn good eating habits and I think you helped in establishing a routine".

"It's great when students answer questions: get them involved".

Conclusion

Based on the positive feedback received by the peer mentors and schools staff, the FAM committee will continue to promote use of peer mentors to deliver the FAM program messages.