



Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute
of Child Health and Human Development



Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active!

*Looking Back, Moving Forward:
Lessons Learned from Grantee Program Coordinators
and Facilitators in 2013*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Media-Smart Youth (MSY) Program, sponsored by the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), teaches middle school-aged youth about the complex media world and how it can influence their health—particularly with respect to nutrition and physical activity. The NICHD funded the following 10 grantees to implement the MSY Program between January and June 2013:

1. Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education (Raleigh, NC)
2. Alkebu-lan Village (Detroit, MI)
3. Boys & Girls Clubs of El Paso (El Paso, TX)
4. Communities In Schools of Greenville (Greenville, SC)
5. Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc. (Pinellas County, FL)
6. EmPoWER Somerset (Somerville, NJ)
7. Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut (Waterbury, CT)
8. Kid Power, Inc. (Washington, DC)
9. School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan (statewide)
10. YWCA El Paso del Norte Region (El Paso, TX)

APPROACH

To learn about grantees' experiences implementing the MSY Program, we conducted telephone interviews with grantee program coordinators and facilitators in May 2013. We also analyzed each organization's implementation experiences based on the information they included in their final grant reports. The aim of these investigations is for future MSY Programs to build on lessons learned from the 2013 grantees.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the findings from the interviews and final reports, we developed a vignette for each of the 10 grantees. These grantee vignettes offer an in-depth, narrative exploration to supplement evaluation data collected. The vignettes are available in the complete report. Below we offer highlights from the findings.

The MSY Program can be adapted to diverse settings. The MSY Program, offered in a variety of settings, gave grantee organizations the flexibility to adapt the program to their particular youth population, program setting, and available community resources.

The MSY Program allows flexibility according to youth interest, space available, and time constraints. The MSY Program allows varying levels of instructors to facilitate the program with no requirements for how, or how long, to implement the entire program or a stand-alone MSY lesson. Individual facilitators adapted, shortened, and/or rearranged the activities of each lesson as they saw fit. MSY Program staff also adapted the program according to middle school students'

interests and level of engagement, and adjusted the program to match the number of students who participated during any one lesson, the age of participants, and the physical space and time available.

Partnership building is one key factor to successful MSY Program implementation and sustainability. Securing partnerships with other community agencies and gaining buy-in from community stakeholders were key factors in successfully implementing the MSY Program. In addition to learning about health, nutrition, and media, some grantees mentioned that the program offers career exploration opportunities for youth when media professionals serve as partners. Grantees who recruited media partners to support the *Big Production* or who took field trips to locations like radio stations and grocery stores reported that these activities were successful and helped to sustain interest in the program.

MSY Program lessons translated into elevated levels of awareness and behavior changes in places outside the program setting. What youth learned through the MSY Program about nutrition, physical activity, and living a healthy lifestyle extended to their personal food choices and levels of physical activity at home, school, and elsewhere.

The most popular MSY activities involved physical, hands-on, and self-directed activities. MSY Program youth across the board most enjoyed “moving and doing” and self-initiated activities. This was clearly exhibited during the interactive physical activity games, hands-on snack preparation, and the development of the *Big Production*. The program offered youth the opportunity to be innovative and to learn about media by creating their own materials and through interactive, hands-on experiences.

The least popular MSY activities involved lessons that reminded youth of academics. MSY Program youth across the board least enjoyed any activity that mimicked school, such as filling out the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys, engaging in Q&A discussions, reviewing talking points and statistics, writing on worksheets and logs/blogs, and examining technical nutrition information.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MSY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Grantees recommended the following practices when implementing the MSY Program:

Youth Participant Recruitment

- Determine how the MSY Program will compete with other after-school activities in the community.
- Recruit youth already enrolled in established after-school programs.
- Use video clips from the MSY Program curriculum DVD when presenting it to potential partners and youth participants.
- Distribute parent permission forms with the MSY Program registration/enrollment forms.

Staff Training

- Train staff members sufficiently so that they embrace the MSY Program.
- Recruit individuals with experience teaching youth.

- Engage at least two adults for each program session, such as a facilitator and a helper.
- Observe the implementation of the program at another site, if possible.

Program Implementation

- Consider integrating the MSY Program into the normal school day or into regularly established after-school activities.
- Allow additional time for administering the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys and creating the *Big Production*. Consider extending the program to 12 instead of 10 total lessons or expand the length of other lessons during the program.
- Tie MSY lessons into existing programming.
- Offer incentives to sustain MSY Program attendance, such as a raffle.
- Adapt to any number of circumstances. For example, tailor *Action Breaks* to match participants' ages and maturity levels and engage older teens to guide younger participants.
- Involve and engage parents/guardians as much as possible.

Partners

- Establish partnerships for the *Big Production*—such as with drama schools, television/radio stations, production companies, and community businesses and gardens—at the outset of the program to incorporate partners throughout the curriculum.
- Borrow media production equipment and facilities for MSY Program activities from partners.

Field Trips

- Organize field trip logistics at the start of the MSY Program.
- Lower transportation costs by walking to and from field trips and seeking bus discounts.

Lesson Preparation

- Recognize that the prep time each week, including making handouts and shopping for materials and food, can take up to 3 hours for every lesson.
- Modify snacks according to the budget, access to certain foods and facilities, and preparation time available.
- Identify ways to tailor the MSY curriculum to make it relevant and interesting to the unique adolescent developmental stage as well as to today's tweens and teens.
- Focus most of the lessons on fun, interactive, and hands-on activities that encourage middle school youth to move.

Promoting the Program Products

- Take plenty of photographs of MSY youth engaging in MSY activities as well as of materials they develop during the program.
- Find venues to showcase the *Big Production* and other MSY activities if permission can be secured, such as on YouTube, Facebook pages, and morning announcements at schools.

BACKGROUND

The Media-Smart Youth (MSY) Program, sponsored by the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), provides educational development opportunities to youth ages 11 to 13 years. The MSY Program teaches middle school-aged youth to build skills in media analysis and production. Through the program, youth learn about the complex media world and how it can influence their health—particularly with respect to nutrition and physical activity.

To meet the NICHD's goal of providing grants to implement the MSY Program, with a particular focus on identifying organizations that serve diverse populations, IQ Solutions, on behalf of the NICHD, awarded 10 grantees \$15,000 each to implement the MSY Program between January 1, 2013, and June 30, 2013. Grantees were required to implement at least three sessions of the MSY Program with at least 15 youth participants in each session. In total, grantees implemented the MSY Program in eight states in four different regions of the country at about 40 site locations.

The 10 funded organizations include:

1. Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education (Raleigh, NC)
2. Alkebu-lan Village (Detroit, MI)
3. Boys & Girls Clubs of El Paso (El Paso, TX)
4. Communities In Schools of Greenville (Greenville, SC)
5. Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc. (Pinellas County, FL)
6. EmPoWER Somerset (Somerville, NJ)
7. Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut (Waterbury, CT)
8. Kid Power, Inc. (Washington, DC)
9. School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan (statewide)
10. YWCA El Paso del Norte Region (El Paso, TX)

(See Appendix C for a detailed listing of grantee program implementation plans.)

To date, there have been two funding phases to implement and test the MSY Program. Lessons learned from the first tested implementation are reported elsewhere. This document pertains to the second phase of funding for the MSY Program. The second-phase grantees are the first to implement the updated version of the MSY curriculum, released in December 2012. IQ Solutions, on behalf of the NICHD, provided ongoing technical assistance to the grantees throughout program implementation. A representative of each organization attended a full-day train-the-trainer session of the MSY Program using the program's official trainer guide in December 2012 before implementation began. They were then tasked with providing the training to organization staff implementing the program and other key partners once they returned home. The NICHD and IQ Solutions also hosted monthly teleconferences with the 10 project coordinators to discuss the progress of the program implementation, share lessons learned, and address any challenges.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to showcase ways grantees implemented the MSY Program during the second phase of the program (January 2013 through June 2013).

APPROACH

INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodologies, such as interviews, can unearth in-depth information useful in understanding how people think, feel, and behave. Telephone interviews, in particular, are valuable for reaching people in diverse locations across the United States in a cost-effective manner. Findings from the interviews for this project are presented in the form of vignettes. These stories offer an in-depth, narrative exploration to supplement evaluation data collected via other mechanisms.

In addition to conducting interviews with grantee site coordinators and facilitators, IQ Solutions analyzed each organization's implementation of the MSY Program based on the information included in their final reports. The final reports detail each grantee's implementation plan, accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned. Key details included in the report provided information on the budget plan, marketing strategy for recruiting partner organizations and youth participants, and implementation structure for each grantee (including setting, program schedule, number of youth participants, and allocation of program resources). IQ Solutions included relevant information from these final reports in this document.

RESEARCH DESIGN

On behalf of the NICHD, IQ Solutions conducted 30-minute telephone interviews with 18 grantee program coordinators and facilitators in May 2013. Specifically, an evaluation researcher conducted interviews with nine coordinators, eight facilitators, and one individual who served as both a coordinator and facilitator. At the time of the interviews, 9 of the 10 grantees had fully completed at least one implementation of the MSY Program.

INTERVIEW OBJECTIVE

The principal objective of the telephone interviews was to learn about grantees' experiences implementing the MSY Program, including challenges and lessons learned that could be applied to future implementations by other groups.

INTERVIEWEE SCHEDULING

During the monthly grantee teleconference on April 17, 2013, the NICHD and IQ Solutions introduced the evaluation researcher who would be conducting the interviews. IQ Solutions then sent grantees an email to connect the researcher with each coordinator, reiterate the purpose of the interviews, and invite coordinators to identify one program facilitator for an interview. The researcher then followed up with another email to each grantee to schedule specific interview dates and times.

INTERVIEW FACILITATION

The evaluation researcher facilitated all interviews using coordinator- and facilitator-specific interviewer guides. (See Appendices A and B.)

INFORMED CONSENT

The evaluation researcher obtained verbal consent at the start of each telephone interview. All interviewees agreed to have their interview audio-recorded and their names and professional titles used in the vignettes reported in this document.

DATA ANALYSIS

The evaluation researcher reviewed the notes from the interviews and referred to audiotapes to code and validate notes and quotes as necessary. The evaluation researcher and the project team arrived at consensus on key crosscutting themes and recommendations. That said, the information presented in the vignettes is what we see through the lens of the MSY Program coordinators and facilitators themselves.

OVERALL FINDINGS

THE MEDIA-SMART YOUTH PROGRAM: A MICROCOSM OF THE UNITED STATES

The 10 grantee vignettes highlighted in this document are a microcosm of the demographic, geographic, economic, and social diversity extant in the United States. Each grantee's assets as well as challenges had ripple effects for how the MSY Program took shape in individual communities.

Securing partnerships with other community agencies and gaining buy-in from community stakeholders were key factors in the successful implementation of the program (see Appendix C). In rural Zebulon, North Carolina, the local newspaper, a local radio station, and principals at neighboring schools rallied behind the MSY Program by providing space in which program activities could be held. Similarly, Pinellas Park, Florida, involved numerous partners including youth services agencies, local YMCA affiliates, municipal government, and a local recreation center to help implement program activities in a variety of settings, including in a school cafeteria, on basketball courts, outdoors, and in open space. Working with a diverse group of partners also helped the grantee organizations reach different populations of youth. El Paso, Texas, worked with a school-based site, a media camp for Latina girls, a housing authority residential site, and a homeless shelter to recruit participants and implement activities.

What youth learned through the MSY Program about nutrition, physical activity, and living a healthy lifestyle extended to their individual food choices and level of physical activity, as well as to the larger community. In urban Detroit, Michigan, 11- to 13-year-olds were the catalyst to convincing the owner of the Village store to offer fruit and granola bars for the first time. The facilitator at El Paso, Texas, made sure participants knew they could walk to the local market from home to buy the ingredients they needed to make their own program snack recipes. In Greenville, South Carolina, program participants took a field trip to an urban garden. In addition, youth participants gained exposure to new and different foods. Program participants in Washington, D.C., offered a "guess the fruit or vegetable by smell and touch only" station during Global Youth Service Day and then shared information about the foods with their peers.

Most of all, the MSY Program offered participants the opportunity to be creative and to learn about media by creating their own materials and through hands-on experience. In small-town Somerville, New Jersey, program participants worked with a local print media production company to create a brochure and posters. In Lansing, Michigan, participants developed their own poster board presentation on Media-Smart Youth, which they displayed at a statewide youth conference. And in Waterbury, Connecticut, participants visited a local cable television company where they held cameras and practiced being on camera.

The MSY Program, offered in a variety of settings, gave the grantee organizations the flexibility to adapt the program to their particular youth population, program setting, and available community resources. Each program implementation offered a unique experience that provided education to youth while also allowing them to have fun.

MEDIA-SMART YOUTH PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES

The tween and teenage years represent a time of wonder as well as instability for youth. Friends are a major source of influence in the joining of cliques and clubs, and emotions can sometimes overpower rational thinking. Academic pressures, budding romantic interests, parental expectations, and a growing sense of self can further intensify an already tumultuous terrain. Given the realities of adolescence, MSY Program coordinators and facilitators stepped up to the challenge. Their program innovations and resourceful ideas kept engaged what they repeatedly referred to as “easily distracted kids.” Not only did they adapt the MSY Program according to middle school students’ interests and level of engagement, coordinators and facilitators also adjusted the program to match the number of students who participated during any one lesson, the age of participants, and the physical space and time available. MSY Program participants across the board most enjoyed “moving and doing” and the self-initiated activities. This was clearly exhibited during the interactive physical activity games, hands-on snack preparation, and the development of the *Big Production*. In particular, the grantees who recruited media partners to support the *Big Production* or who took field trips to locations, such as radio stations or grocery stores, reported that the activities were a big success and helped to sustain interest in the program.

Very importantly, all grantees observed that youth participants made connections to how media around them influence their nutrition and physical activity behaviors. Participants learned to consciously think and act on this topic by analyzing Nutrition Facts labels, logging daily forms of personal physical activity engagement and media exposure, noticing the strategic placement of cereal in supermarket aisles, realizing that healthy options are tasty and not necessarily expensive, considering what goes into a print or broadcast production, and engaging in dialogue with store owners, peers, and family members.

Given numerous comments from youth participants related to never having tried a certain fruit or combination of foods (e.g., whole-wheat tortilla quesadilla or yogurt and trail mix) and not knowing the relationship between serving size and the quantity of certain nutrients in a food container before being part of the MSY Program, this program filled a need with respect to healthy snacks and nutrition education. This also applied to specific information about physical activity, including the notion that certain regular daily activities (e.g., walking to school) “count” as physical activity.

MEDIA-SMART YOUTH PROGRAM AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

MSY Program participants across the board *least* enjoyed any activity that mimicked school, such as filling out the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys, engaging in Q&A discussions, reviewing talking points and statistics, writing on worksheets and logs, and examining technical nutrition information.

Grantees across the board reported not having enough time to complete lessons or having to condense lesson lengths to adjust to available time slots at facilities hosting the MSY Program or to sustain participants’ attention spans (particularly in after-school settings). They found that more time needed to be earmarked for the *Big Production*, with the most typical suggestion being to hold it across two or three lessons instead of one. Extending the number of sessions to more than 10 also may allow some grantees to engage in other field trips, such as to the grocery store. Another area for

which time was not factored includes the administration of the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys. Increasing the number of sessions planned for the program to more than 10 will allow all program components to be completed sufficiently.

Several grantees also did not anticipate the length of preparation time necessary before each lesson, particularly with respect to shopping and preparing food for snacks. As one interviewee noted, she spent about 3 hours preparing for every lesson.

A few programs noted that it was difficult to recruit participants because they were competing with other after-school programs. Grantees who were integrating the curriculum into an already established program (e.g., an existing after-school program or camp) or into the school day had a much easier time filling the session and sustaining participation throughout the program's duration. Successful program recruitment strategies included:

- Distributing fliers at sites
- Promoting the program on the organization's Facebook page
- Posting the media products created by students on YouTube and Facebook for ongoing interest (e.g., blogs, videos)
- Promoting the program at conferences.

Many programs reported it was hard to get parents to sign the release forms to allow their child's videos to be used on the website because they did not have regular, direct contact with the parents. The teens were fairly independent, tending to arrive to and from the program on their own.

MEDIA-SMART YOUTH TIPS FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Grantees recommended the following practices when implementing the program:

- When planning for the program, allow for additional time to facilitate the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys and for creating the *Big Production*. Some grantees suggested that having 11 or 12 sessions instead of 10 would have worked better. Others suggested that having the pre-curriculum assessment survey filled out prior to the first session would be ideal.
- Consider integrating the program into the normal school day and/or determine how you will compete with other after-school activities to recruit and attract up to 15 youth for the program. This could include leveraging established contacts at partner organization sites and showing the value of the program in broader terms (e.g., in addition to learning about health, nutrition, and media, the program also offers career exploration opportunities if media professionals serve as partners).
- Use video clips from the curriculum DVD to promote the program when presenting it to potential partners and participants.
- If there is interest in posting the videos of the *Big Production* on a website or sharing them with the NICHD, hand out the parent permission forms with the MSY Program registration/enrollment forms. This will increase the likelihood that you will receive them back.
- Consider in advance if there are potential partner organizations for the *Big Production*, such as drama schools, television stations, or production companies. Establish these relationships at the

outset of the program so you can incorporate the partner into the entire curriculum and not just in the final session.

- Determine at the beginning if the program will take any field trips, and organize the logistics for those trips prior to the start of the program.
- Offer incentives for program attendance (e.g., raffle).
- Adapt to any number of circumstances (e.g., tailoring *Action Breaks* to match participants' ages and maturity levels, engaging older teens to guide younger participants).
- Recognize that the prep time each week (making the handouts, shopping for the materials and food, etc.) can take up to 3 hours each week, and make sure the moderator has planned accordingly.
- Modify snacks according to your budget, access to certain foods, and preparation time available.
- Lower transportation costs by walking to and from field trips and seeking bus discounts.
- Borrow equipment and facilities for program activities from partners.
- Obtain access to media production equipment to help improve the student experience; many middle schools offer this equipment in-house and may be willing to allow students access.
- Find venues to showcase the *Big Productions* if permission can be secured (e.g., on YouTube, Facebook pages, morning announcements at schools); it can be a way to demonstrate the value of the program to participants.
- Identify ways to tailor the curriculum to make it relevant and interesting to your youth.

We also heard from a handful of sites that some parents were interested in how they could be engaged in the program. One option for sites to consider to engage parents in the program is to offer other We Can! programs (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>) that occur simultaneously with MSY sessions.

Program coordinators offered the following suggestions to future coordinators:

- Secure initial buy-in from staff during the application submission stage.
- Recruit youth already enrolled in established after-school programs.
- Engage community partners—from nonprofit organizations to businesses.
- Train staff members sufficiently so that they embrace the program.
- Tie MSY lessons into existing programming.
- Offer the program as part of a school-based curriculum.
- Hire individuals with experience teaching youth.
- Engage at least two adults for each program session, such as a facilitator and a helper.

Program facilitators offered the following suggestions to future facilitators:

- Be flexible and therefore prepared to adapt and change.
- Know your audience.
- Sustain participants' attention—a challenging prospect with the middle school population.
- Bring your own personal energy and excitement to the content.
- Focus most of the lessons on fun, interactive, and hands-on activities that encourage participants to move.
- Invite participants to take part in self-initiated activities with plenty of room for creativity.

- Observe the implementation of the program at another site, if possible.
- Plan ahead by obtaining needed materials and supplies in advance.
- Buy snacks in bulk.
- Factor in plenty of time to review the lessons and materials as well as to prepare food for snack time, before the lesson day.
- Confirm attendance prior to each lesson.
- Start working on the *Big Production* earlier.
- Involve and engage parents/guardians as much as possible.

IQ Solutions also suggests that program coordinators and facilitators take plenty of photographs of the MSY youth engaging in MSY activities (if parents have granted permission), as well as of the materials developed during the MSY Program. Photographs are helpful when seeking funding, making presentations, and promoting the program.

Media-Smart Youth Program grantees named numerous organizations within their local communities that assisted them in implementing the program that might prove to be good potential partners for other sites. These included:

- After-school sites and programs
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Community-based organizations
- Community gardens
- Girl Scout troops
- Grocery stores
- Health departments
- Homeless shelters
- Hospitals
- Housing Authority
- Media production companies
- Middle schools and their faculty and staff
- Municipal government
- Newspapers
- Radio stations
- Recording studios
- Recreation centers
- Social services agencies
- Television stations
- Universities and community colleges
- YMCA affiliates
- Youth camps

VIGNETTES

The pages that follow offer vignettes of the accomplishments and challenges of each Media-Smart Youth Program grantee in implementing the program.

The vignettes are presented in alphabetical order by grantee.

ALICE AYCOCK POE CENTER FOR HEALTH EDUCATION, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Background

The Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education (the Poe Center) is a nonprofit agency that delivers health education across the entire state of North Carolina. Given the vast geographic area covered, the populations served are varied. That said, the Poe Center has been serving mainly youth and children for the past 20 years and is beginning to offer family-oriented programming.

Although the Poe Center specifically serves 76 of the 100 counties in North Carolina, it implemented the Media-Smart Youth (MSY) Program in three Wake County settings: (1) the Ligon Middle School in Raleigh, held during an after-school program; (2) the Wake Young Women’s Leadership Academy (an all-girls charter middle school in its first year of operation) in Raleigh, held during the regular school day; and (3) the Zebulon Boys & Girls Club, held during an after-school program.

Given that one of the programs took place during the school day and that the Poe Center has established contacts at these partners’ after-school sites, recruiting youth for the MSY Program was not difficult. Youth were already in after-school programs, so they signed up for the free MSY Program as their after-school activity. That said, the Poe Center did engage in some promotion of the MSY Program. This included promoting and publicizing each program through their mascot’s (Seymour Poe) Facebook page, the Poe Center Web page, and press releases. The Poe Center designed a promotional flyer, individualizing it for each site. In addition, the Center created a Media-Smart Youth Raleigh Facebook page for the promotion and publication of all MSY productions for which permission forms had been obtained. They also posted student blogs and some of the *Big Productions*.

The three partners committed time for the Poe Center to conduct ten 2-hour MSY sessions at their sites as well as to have an adult from the partner entity be present during the sessions. The MSY Program coordinator conducted a training session for the Poe staff members and facilitators. All sessions were held in classrooms equipped with smart boards for viewing DVDs, and physical activities occurred mostly outdoors and sometimes in the hallway.

Demographic Snapshot

Raleigh, NC

Capital of and second largest city in North Carolina

Known as the “City of Oaks” for its many oak trees

Total population: 416,468

57.5% White/Caucasian

29.3% Black/African American

4.3% Asian American

0.5% American Indian

11.3% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$46,612

Mission

The mission of the Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education is to educate and empower North Carolina children, youth, and their families to make choices that increase positive health behaviors so that all North Carolina children and youth become healthy adults.

Program Implementation

Ligon Middle School. The Ligon Middle School site delivered MSY lessons once a week, after-school, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The programming ran January 28, 2013, through April 8, 2013. To complete and film this site's *Big Production*, the facilitator at this site conducted an additional session on April 15, 2013, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The facilitator delivered all MSY activities on the middle school campus, both in a classroom and outdoors in the courtyard.

Ligon Middle School MSY participants created television commercials as their *Big Production*. Youth filmed and edited their commercials in the school's production room that included a fully equipped media production room with a blue screen, editing and filming equipment, and helpful experts on staff. Youth showed their completed productions during the school's morning news broadcast. Ligon Middle School staff gave each MSY student, as well as all MSY administrative staff involved, a DVD containing the *Big Production* as well as additional footage recorded during the 10 MSY sessions.

The Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy. The MSY Program at Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy (WYWLA) included 32 young girls who participated in 11 sessions during the school's fourth period from 12:50 p.m. to 2:10 p.m. Since there were 32 participants, the WYWLA broke them into seven groups of three to five girls per group to promote more critical thinking and deeper student involvement.

The WYWLA used two iPad devices from the Poe Center to film their *Big Production*. Initially, youth at this site were going to develop radio ads for their *Big Production*, as this group had a radio professional speak during a MSY session. However, some of the girls wanted to be filmed, so the program allowed the groups who had obtained permission slips to do so.

The WYWLA used attendance incentives sparingly since the expectation of participation and involvement were a part of the school day.

Using the Fooducate app, the facilitator implemented the grocery tour in the classroom. With the app, the girls scanned a product bar code and observed the rating from the app. They then stated the parts of the food that are beneficial or less healthy.

The Zebulon Boys & Girls Club. The Zebulon Boys & Girls Club is in a new facility in a rural part of Wake County. It is within walking distance from Zebulon Middle School. The Zebulon Boys & Girls Club is a loosely structured, after-school program that offers homework assistance, a computer lab, recreation activities, including a gym and pool tables, and a library/study room.

The Zebulon Boys & Girls Club offered MSY as a part of its "drop-in" after-school program for 10 sessions on Monday afternoons. Due to constraints, the facilitator condensed each program session to 60 minutes.

For the *Big Production*, the Zebulon Boys & Girls Club MSY participants created a radio advertisement jingle designed to promote physical activity among middle school youth and encourage them to "dance 60 minutes every day." The jingle suggested doing the "Wobble" or the "Harlem Shake." Staff promoted the radio ad jingle within the Zebulon Boys & Girls Club, on the Poe

Center’s MSY Facebook page, and on the Poe Center’s website. Staff at this site did not involve any partners in the production.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

MSY Program participants most enjoyed “doing and making” things (especially “getting to move”). On his own time, one youth participant generated a personalized schedule for how he is going to integrate whole grains into his daily life.

“The kids most enjoyed doing and making things, especially getting to move.”

Lauren McCallum,
Coordinator

Youth most enjoyed snack and physical activity time, as well as talking about media. Even though youth had been exposed to fresh fruit, yogurt, and cereal, the idea of *combining* them together for a snack, for example, was new. Youth also reacted favorably to the creative activities, such as the “Giddy Up Granola Bar” radio ads, jingles, action heroes, and posters/billboards. The students additionally liked being filmed and watching themselves on television—the Poe Center therefore attempted to film them whenever possible.

Youth *least* enjoyed the part of the MSY curriculum that “felt like school,” such as writing and recording on worksheets, the blog, the Q&A discussions, and the pre-curriculum assessment survey. One week, a couple of MSY Program participants began acting up during the worksheet writing activity and had to be asked to leave. Although 15 minutes may have been allotted for the worksheets, “youth were wrapping up their worksheets within 5 to 7 minutes.” Writing on newsprint, compared to writing on worksheets, was more acceptable to the youth.

Thomas Ray, the MSY Program facilitator, observed that youth in the rural setting wanted to appear knowledgeable of social media, when in reality smartphones and Internet access are very limited in their area. As is typical in this developmental stage, these youth “didn’t want to appear like they didn’t know” about certain media. Given this context, Mr. Ray reached out to Zebulon’s *Eastern Wake News* newspaper and requested that a journalist help youth create a *print* media product. In comparison, the Wake Young Women’s Leadership Academy worked with a radio station to produce a radio recording, and Ligon Middle School partnered with the high school’s television station to create a video.

From the informal feedback that Mr. Ray received and his own observations, youth are thinking, analyzing, and critically evaluating media around them.

All staff at both schools and the Boys & Girls Club were positive about the program. The Poe Center was asked if they could come back next year. An administrator at Ligon Middle School informed the MSY Program facilitator that the students were performing very well and participating more with Media-Smart Youth in comparison to their usual behavior. Every site was able to promote the program to other students and staff members at their school or club with their billboard productions and showing of the final *Big Production* footage. Parents and site staff were appreciative. Youth were notably sad that the program was ending.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

MSY Program coordinator, Lauren McCallum, enlisted the following community partners to assist in the implementation of the MSY Program: (1) the Boys & Girls Club in Zebulon; (2) CONCERT (Communities Organizing to Nurture and Celebrate East Raleigh Talent), a local community-based organization; and (3) a school principal. Although permission from parents/guardians had already been obtained for their children to participate in activities at these sites, only a handful gave permission for their children's media products (e.g., homemade filmed commercials) to be used in a public manner, such as being posted on a website.

In Mr. Ray's experience, switching across a variety of activities in each lesson helped youth stay involved. His advice to future MSY facilitators is to "bring your own personal energy and excitement to the content."

Although the preparation and purchasing aspects of the MSY Program are "labor-intensive," Mr. Ray reported that the time allotted for the MSY sessions is "ample." However, this time allotment did not fit with the schedules of the Boys & Girls Club, which was only able to offer a 1-hour time slot. Therefore, the original 4:30 p.m. start time had to be moved to 4:15 p.m. because many parents had to pick up their kids at 5:15 p.m. Furthermore, to save on time, Mr. Ray prepared snacks 15 to 30 minutes ahead of time so that snacks were on kids' plates when they came in, before beginning tabletop activities.

Conversely, the Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy site completed 10 sessions but had to add an 11th one to finish the *Big Production*. Moreover, although 90 minutes is the designated amount of time for the *Big Production*, this site had to complete this activity within a condensed 70 minutes. Mr. Ray reported that this site was "the most consistently attended group and was the series that was held during the regular school day."

If Ms. McCallum could adapt the MSY Program, she would add an 11th session or condense the last three sessions into one to have enough time to plan, practice, and film the *Big Production*. She concluded: "It's been a fun learning experience," suggesting that coordinators in the future "plan ahead, buy snacks in bulk, and add an extra session or consolidate the last three sessions."

"Bring your own personal energy and excitement to the content."

Thomas Ray, Facilitator

Looking Ahead

MSY is now part of the Poe Center's menu of nutrition programming series and will be marketed with all of its regular promotions, including promoting MSY as a deliverable series for summer camps that serve upper elementary and middle school students. The Poe Center requested funding from the Department of Social Services to implement five MSY series during the 2013–2014 academic year. It plans to deliver three series during the school year and two series as a week-long summer camp in 2014.

The Poe Center delivered a presentation on the Media-Smart Youth Program at the North Carolina Healthy Schools Institute in Wilmington, North Carolina (a conference attended by 150 health

education professionals from across North Carolina). Attendees were interested and enthusiastic about the curriculum. The Poe Center is considering offering future trainings at their facility.

ALKEBU-LAN VILLAGE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Background

Alkebu-lan Village is an after-school, community-based program serving mostly African American and low-income young people and their families residing in impoverished areas of Detroit's east side, neighborhoods where a disproportionate number of youth live in single-parent homes. Alkebu-lan Village started in 1978 to provide affordable martial arts training for African American youth. Today, the organization provides comprehensive, after-school care for youth, including a hot meal, a study period, and a variety of youth development activities. Alkebu-lan Village focuses on "strengthening families."

Alkebu-lan Village collaborates with five neighboring elementary schools and other local nonprofits. Maxine Willis, multimedia training coordinator and MSY Program coordinator, intentionally aimed to recruit an equal number of students from the five neighboring schools—about three students from each school—so that word about the MSY Program would spread more widely to other students and teachers.

Program Implementation

Alkebu-lan Village provided three 10-week sessions of the MSY Program in one location (7701 Harper, Detroit). Alkebu-lan Village automatically assigned youth to participate in the MSY Program (with up to 15 youth per session) who met the age requirement and were currently enrolled in Alkebu-lan Village after-school and summer programs. Parents who were interested could attend a program orientation. After the first 10-week session, Alkebu-lan expanded the MSY lessons from 1½ to 2 hours and allocated the last 30 minutes of each class toward the *Big Production*. In addition, youth in all three programs met during an 11th week for 2 hours to complete the *Big Production*.

The first *Big Production* consisted of youth creating a hip hop song and dance with the message, "Don't eat that fatty food." Youth wrote letters to a local television station, MY TV-20, requesting that it air their messages on the K.E.Y.S. (Kids Enjoy Yourself) KIDS show. Danszar De Dinosaur, one of the main characters on K.E.Y.S. KIDS, conveyed MSY Program messages several times. The second *Big Production* involved youth encouraging the Village storeowner to provide healthy alternatives to the main snack offerings of nachos and candy. The storeowner, in response to the youth's presentation, added nutritious snacks to the store inventory. These youth also created a video skit to encourage other youth to purchase healthy snacks. The video skit features youth on a field trip to the fruit market, purchasing fruits and vegetables they had never tried until the MSY Program. The third *Big Production* engaged youth in the development of a video of MSY Program participants sharing what they learned during the program, a montage of what youth enjoyed most, and participants receiving certificates of completion and fruit baskets.

Demographic Snapshot

Detroit, MI

Largest city in Michigan

Known as the world's traditional automotive center

Total population in metropolitan Detroit: 5.2 million

10.6% White/Caucasian

82.7% Black/African American

1.1% Asian American

0.4% American Indian

6.8% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$25,787

Mission

Alkebu-lan Village is an Afrikan-centered, community-based organization committed to developing and nurturing an environment where families work together to build healthy minds, bodies, and communities.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

The MSY nutrition component—which included taking a trip to the fruit market, bringing home baskets of fruit, and reading Nutrition Facts labels—had a huge impact on participants, according to Ms. Willis. Much of the nutrition information was “new and different” to them. One participant exclaimed, “I never knew how to read food labels; now, I’m going to show my mom.”

“The kids didn’t even know what calcium was, had never tried a mango or some nuts before, and had no idea about the sugar and fat content that they were eating. When they tried banana chips, for example, they loved them!”

Ms. Willis shared. A clear indication of the effect of the MSY nutrition lessons was the change in food items offered by the Alkebu-lan Village convenience store. Before participating in the MSY Program, youth would “run to the store to buy hot nachos or Skittles.” During the program, the youth got the owner of the store to offer fruit and granola bars for the first time. “This change was driven *by the kids!*” added Ms. Willis.

Another way MSY Program participants took initiative in the nutrition area was to serve healthy snacks to all Alkebu-lan Village youth. After school, Alkebu-lan kids receive a hot meal when they first arrive and before they begin homework and are then directed to their prospective classes. MSY participants enjoyed being kitchen helpers—for example, by cutting celery and carrots—as well as engaging in dialogue with their peers about what they had learned. “Do you know how much fat content is in that?” one MSY participant asked another Alkebu-lan Village youth.

Because MSY participants had to decode commercials and messages through the media skills and analysis component of the MSY Program, Ms. Willis heard the following comments from youth: “My mom said, ‘You know more than I do about healthy eating’”; “I will never look at commercials about food the same”; “I will not sit in front of the TV all day and play video games”; “When I get up in the morning, I will not eat chips and donuts; I will eat something healthy”; and “We talked about things that we don’t learn in school.” Parents, too, remarked that their children “had never talked about commercials like that before.” And, parents have shared that as a result of the program, *they* have changed their eating habits and discuss media messages with their children.

The games and exercises included in the MSY Program physical activity lessons “were what made the program fun and exciting, especially when the kids started to get antsy.” Participants’ favorite activities included the “Motion Commotion” and “Snacks and Better Bones” lessons, field trips, and the *Big Production*. According to Ms. Willis, “The most fascinating thing to the kids was seeing themselves in the *Big Production* and feeling a sense of pride in what they helped to create.”

Ms. Willis added, “Facilitators had the opportunity to have fun, too.” The facilitators liked the detailed structure, flexibility, and adaptability of the program, the ready-made resources, and that the hands-on, interactive activities helped keep youth interested and involved.

Before participating in the MSY Program, youth would “run to the store to buy hot nachos or Skittles.” During the program, the youth got the owner of the store to offer fruit and granola bars for the first time. “This change was driven by the kids!”

Maxine Willis, Coordinator

The Village also made 11 presentations from March 2013 through August 2013 that reached approximately 220 parents, community members, and business leaders to promote, and seek support for, the MSY Program.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Ms. Willis understands the importance of adult role modeling for children, so during the train-the-trainer session, she secured buy-in from her staff on ways MSY would sustain Alkebu-lan's mission and on the importance of involving the whole family. That said, some MSY participants faced resistance at home when their parents/guardians argued that their budget does not allow for healthier foods. To address this issue, Ms. Willis integrated role-playing activities for youth participants to practice. They learned ways to talk about MSY information with family members. Ms. Willis also sent home personalized letters with tips on how parents/guardians can address related questions from their children. Youth participants also recounted stories of telling their parents/guardians to visit Subway instead of McDonalds (and selecting healthier options) and buying frozen yogurt sticks instead of ice cream, as a direct result of what they learned in the MSY Program. Ms. Willis involved parents/guardians by sending home handouts that included recipes, which parents/guardians "loved," and talking with them when they picked up youth after MSY sessions.

Ms. Willis observed changes in knowledge from the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys. Whereas participants took a long time to complete the pre-curriculum assessment survey, they knew the answers for the post-curriculum assessment survey. "It is so rewarding seeing the kids showcase what they learned," Ms. Willis proudly noted.

Looking Ahead

Ms. Willis stated she is "professionally and personally committed to sustaining the Media-Smart Youth Program." As a professional in the area of drug prevention education for 30 years, she feels the MSY Program "is well written and covers everything. From day one, we were sold on the Media-Smart Youth Program." Given her current relationships with TV20, TV33, and local radio station WHPR FM, Ms. Willis plans to continue to disseminate MSY messages. She already has approached OfficeMax, Staples, and Whole Foods for donations to be able to implement the MSY Program again. She communicated with these potential partners when she frequented their stores January 2013 through June 2013 to purchase MSY supplies and talked about the value in sustaining the MSY Program in the community after June.

"From day one, we were sold on the Media-Smart Youth Program."

Maxine Willis, Coordinator

Ms. Willis has presented on the MSY Program at the City Council, Detroit Health Department, and Wayne State University, the latter of which has expressed interest in implementing MSY during its self-esteem camp. Last but not least, MSY participant family members, especially older Alkebu-lan Village members (age 14 and 15), have asked to take part in MSY. As she could accept only 15 kids per MSY Program, Ms. Willis thinks she can include older teens as peer helpers during the summer program. She advises future MSY Program coordinators and facilitators to "get the needed materials and supplies ahead of time and involve parents as much as possible."

In summary, the Alkebu-lan Village onsite store now provides a variety of healthy snacks; the MSY Program has been integrated into existing Village programming; the monthly Village night will include a “Media-Smart Parents” activity where parents conduct healthy snack demos; a local television station is soliciting a sponsor to feature a segment on the MSY Program to air weekly; four neighboring schools have requested training in the MSY Program; and a local business across from the Village has provided space for youth to grow a garden.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF EL PASO, EL PASO, TEXAS

Background

The Boys & Girls Clubs of El Paso (BGCEP) implemented the MSY Program at three sites in south El Paso: (1) the Boys & Girls Club Janacek, a school-based site located at Montana Vista Elementary School in far-east El Paso (the club serves an area known as a *colonia*, which are unincorporated communities along the Mexican/U.S. border; nearly all [92 percent] of the youth served are immigrants from Juarez, Mexico, with Spanish being their first language); (2) Club Travis Petty, which serves the El Paso Segundo Barrio in downtown El Paso (the second poorest community in the United States as of a couple of years ago, with a median annual household income of \$5,000 to \$6,000); and (3) the Boys & Girls Club Delta, located in a community with a median annual household income of \$10,000. The MSY facilitator at the downtown location (Club Travis Petty) had to deliver MSY lessons in English and Spanish.

Each facilitator recruited participants within his or her own organization, as well as via Keystone and Torch Clubs (preteen and teen clubs that focus on giving back to the community and supporting future leaders). MSY activities took place in game rooms, open areas, and portable schools (small buildings with two classrooms). BGCEP also promoted the MSY Program by issuing a media release to several media outlets throughout El Paso. A reporter from the *El Paso Times*, the local newspaper, visited Club Petty and interviewed one of the MSY participants. An article featuring the MSY Program appeared in the *El Paso Times* several weeks later.

Ana Chacon, facilitator for the Boys & Girls Club Janacek MSY Program, is a student at the University of Texas at El Paso, working to earn her degree in education and become a teacher. Originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, she is bilingual and bicultural, which allowed her to optimally serve the 9- to 12-year-old, urban youth of Mexican descent enrolled in the MSY Program. Many of these youth are bilingual, but some only speak Spanish. Ms. Chacon facilitated the program in both English and Spanish with 8 to 13 youth participating (attendance varied weekly).

Demographic Snapshot

El Paso, TX

Stands on the Rio Grande, across the border from Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico

Home to the University of Texas at

El Paso and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso

Total population: 649,121

80.84% White/Caucasian

3.39% Black/African American

1.18% Asian American

0.73% American Indian

86.62% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$32,124

Mission

The Boys & Girls Clubs of El Paso aims to enable all people, especially those most in need, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible adults.

"The Big Production helped open the kids' eyes to the future. Instead of thinking they want to become police officers because that is all they see, they learned that they can go to school for media activities. They had no idea about this before."

Isaac Hernandez, Coordinator

Program Implementation

Club Janacek. Club Janacek offered the MSY curriculum to two different groups from Monday through Friday for 2 weeks beginning April 2013, with one lesson covered each day. The facilitator at this site then added two additional sessions to implement the *Big Production*. The facilitator implemented the program in two portable classrooms and used outdoor space to implement the physical activities. The first group developed a public service announcement (PSA) that promoted the use of football as a way to be physically active outdoors and provided recommendations for making football an enjoyable activity. The second group produced a video that also encourages children to be physically active.

Club Petty. Club Petty implemented the MSY curriculum twice a week for 10 sessions that lasted 60 minutes to 80 minutes during winter/spring 2013. The facilitator added 2 additional weeks to implement the *Big Production*. The facilitator at this site implemented the program in a game room area and conducted physical activities in a large gym with a full-size basketball court. Youth engaged in media production editing in the computer lab. Youth conceived and developed a video for the *Big Production*. They recorded the video with video cameras and edited it at the computer lab. The kids also generated their own song about healthy eating.

Club Delta. Club Delta implemented the MSY curriculum once a week for 1 hour to 1½ hours, primarily in a small classroom. The facilitator conducted the physical activities in the adjacent full-size gym. Youth developed a PSA video to teach other kids about how they can have a healthy lifestyle by eating right and exercising. Club Delta disseminated their PSA video to the larger community by posting it on YouTube. One of the camera operators for KFOX, the local FOX news affiliate, helped kids with the project by teaching them different camera angles for filming and helping to edit the narrative.

To buy the ingredients for the *Snack Breaks*, Isaac Hernandez, director of operations for BGCEP for 15 years and MSY Program coordinator, intentionally shopped at local supermarkets—markets close enough to participants' homes so that their families can walk to access the same foods he purchased for snack time (instead of buying food from stores that were many miles away, inaccessible to families lacking transportation).

BGCEP also partnered with a local rock radio station that held a fundraising event for the MSY Program and posted the video on the station's Facebook page. The downtown location group took field trips to a professional recording studio that showed participants how to use the equipment. Mr. Hernandez shared, "The *Big Production* helped open the kids' eyes to the future. Instead of thinking they want to become police officers because that is all they see, they learned that they can go to school for media activities. They had no idea about this before."

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

All three sites reported that the youth liked the program overall, especially the *Snack Breaks* and the video developed for the *Big Production*.

At first, youth participants from Club Delta “weren’t really into the program” because “they didn’t understand what ‘media smart’ meant,” Ms. Chacon said. When she asked participants to list examples of “media,” they mostly gave social media examples. They were not aware that billboards, for example, are included in the umbrella definition of media. Moreover, participants did not know what a blog was when they began the program. However, they “eventually looked forward to the program and learned a lot, especially how to eat.”

Mr. Hernandez observed, “Our kids had a lot of fun with this program.”

Youth participants most enjoyed the *Action Breaks*, as “this got them out of their environment instead of sitting and listening to a lecture,” said Mr. Hernandez. Youth participants also enjoyed making their own snacks, such as trail mix. “They loved creating their own snacks, including trail mix and granola and yogurt,” he added.

In addition, at Club Petty, there were a couple of parents who reported that their children were eating healthier.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The main challenge was sustaining participants’ interest in 90-minute sessions when all activities at BGCEP are structured around 60-minute rotating time slots. Every day, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., after-school programs focus on homework assistance. From 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., youth rotate among different activities, including gym and technology.

Another challenge was ensuring consistent attendance. Mr. Hernandez shared that his organization’s programs are geared mostly toward elementary school children because participation begins to drop off in the middle and high school years. Snack time was a key component in retaining participants. “The healthy snacks kept the kids coming.”

To ensure that attendance would be high at the sessions, Ms. Chacon advised the other facilitators to confirm attendance as well as to factor in plenty of time to review the lessons before the day of the lesson.

An additional challenge was fully including youth participants who speak only Spanish in the activities. Ms. Chacon had to translate every activity in real time to include all youth.

Although Ms. Chacon reported that the time allotted for MSY Program lessons was accurate in her experience, she sometimes had to “cut a lesson short because three related kids would get picked up together early.” She adapted by continuing the shortened lesson at the following week’s session. The younger kids, she observed, became distracted more easily and quickly than the older ones, especially toward the end of a lesson. This applied particularly to the completion of the worksheets.

Moreover, Erick Trevizo, the director at Club Petty, reported that “the teaching content, specifically the videos, did not seem age-appropriate for some of the older kids.” He found the videos to be more appropriate for the younger kids in the group.

The greatest success for Ms. Chacon as well as the youth participants was the creation of the *Big Production*, a PSA posted on YouTube. A television camera operator from KFOX14 visited the participants, helped them write scripts, and trained them on video camera angles. “The kids found it fun to actually make something,” Ms. Chacon observed.

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

For future implementations of the program, Mr. Hernandez suggested that it would be helpful to modify the curriculum so that each lesson is a maximum of 60 minutes, which would translate into structuring the program as 15 modules. Otherwise, in his experience, “Kids start to get antsy.”

“The kids found it fun to actually make something.”

Ana Chacon, Facilitator

Ms. Chacon recommended gearing the promotion of the MSY Program toward older youth; in her opinion, 13- to 15-year-olds would be the ideal audience.

Both Mr. Hernandez and Ms. Chacon suggested developing bilingual materials, particularly for those being sent home to parents who speak Spanish only.

Looking Ahead

At present, BGCEP does not have plans for sustaining the MSY Program.

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS OF GREENVILLE, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Background

The MSY Program implemented by Communities In Schools (CIS) of Greenville (a dropout prevention program) took place in three Greenville County public schools that serve at-risk youth: (1) Greer Middle School, (2) Lakeview Middle School, and (3) Tanglewood Middle School. Together, through the MSY Program, the three schools served 47 students.

Each of the three MSY facilitators works as a youth social worker and manages a caseload of students at these schools. Recruitment, therefore, was not an issue. For example, Katie Keller, CIS site coordinator at Lakeview Middle School and MSY Program coordinator, used her Monday after-school club time with 15 students to implement the MSY Program. The established rapport with these students allowed Ms. Keller to jump right into the MSY Program and adapt it as necessary given the known interests of her students. The setting for the MSY lessons was a home economics classroom—ideally equipped with a kitchen, sinks, and a long table. Because Ms. Keller implemented the MSY Program with students already enrolled in after-school programs, her site's costs were contained (e.g., there were no overhead costs or costs to pay for facilitator salaries).

Ashlee Barnes, site manager at Tanglewood Middle School and MSY Program facilitator, has been working in middle schools for 12 years. Tanglewood Middle School is a Title I school serving sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade boys and girls, most of whom are enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch program. (Note: Title I schools are those with high numbers of children from low-income families that receive federal funds to help ensure that all children meet state academic standards). Ms. Barnes serves as case manager at Tanglewood for 35 students in the after-school program. Because students do not attend after-school activities consistently, she drew from a list of 20 students to ensure an average of 10 to 12 sixth-grade students participated in MSY every Thursday, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., for 10 weeks.

Program Implementation

CIS implemented all modules of the MSY Program curriculum, including the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys, at three separate sites. Staff held all modules on school campuses, mainly utilizing the home economics classroom and cafeteria.

Greer Middle School. Greer Middle School engaged students in nine 2-hour sessions and one final video compilation session combining media and thoughtful messaging. The *Big Production* took place

Demographic Snapshot

Greenville, SC

Largest city in the upstate

Home to four independent theaters (BI-LO Center, The Peace Center, The Warehouse Theatre, and Centre Stage)

Total urban area population: 400,492

62.12% White/Caucasian
31.54% Black/African American
1.27% Asian American
0.14% American Indian
3.44% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$33,144

Mission

The mission of Communities In Schools (Greenville affiliate incorporated in 1991, national organization in the 1970s) is to surround students with a community of support empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

after a field trip to the local news station where students actively participated in mock-news tapings. They met with different set workers to discuss the career aspects of reporters, anchors, camera people, and crew members.

Lakeview Middle School. Lakeview Middle School followed the MSY curriculum sequentially for 90 minutes per week and completed the *Big Production* in a two-part series—preparation and execution. The *Big Production* was conducted in newscast format. Students assisted as writers, reporters, a host, cue card holders, and crew members. They used iPhones to record the *Big Production*.

Tanglewood Middle School. Tanglewood Middle School completed its MSY Program in eight sessions during 2-hour blocks, following the curriculum sequentially. For the *Big Production*, students created two videos focused on the importance of healthy eating and exercising with “peer persuasion” as the theme. They also visited Merus Refreshment Services, Inc., to learn about “out-of-the-box” careers. After that visit, one student said she was considering being a truck driver who delivers food—a career path for which she had never previously been exposed.

Each of the site coordinators found the MSY Program curriculum “extremely easy to implement” because of the materials provided and assistance available. “It was a matter of building that time into their program planning at the beginning of the school year.” However, administrative staff found the students still had room to improve on their *Big Production* pieces. That said, this first experience with MSY offered this grantee a foundation from which to improve processes when they implement the program again.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

All sites reported that the students enjoyed the MSY Program and wanted it to continue for more than the allotted time. Some students had not had the opportunity before the program to taste such a wide array of fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy dessert options, and well-balanced meals.

Youth participants most enjoyed the healthy snacks (e.g., string cheese, fresh fruits, vegetables) and learning about their nutritional value, followed by the physical activities (e.g., games), especially given that they had been in classrooms all day. Ms. Barnes, for example, made it a point to convey to the youth that healthy snacks “are not necessarily expensive.”

It was gratifying for one of the facilitators, Ms. Barnes, to see that the youth enjoyed experimenting with fruits and vegetables, as the school lunch and snacks they receive are not optimal with respect to nutritional value. “Kids would enthusiastically ask, ‘What are we going to make today?’”

Participants *least* enjoyed the writing activities. Ms. Barnes suspects this is partly because “it may have been too much for 11- to 12-year-olds.” Moreover, she explained, “The children did not know what a blog is; this population doesn’t blog, nor do their parents. And the only computer access they have is at school.”

A classroom teacher assisted Ms. Barnes with the technological aspects of the *Big Production*, while she encouraged the students to “think about how they wanted to convey the message to the

audience.” For the *Big Production*, the students created two short videos—a girls’ video and a boys’ video. Ms. Barnes said, “The students were able to make the connection between negative media portrayals of food and activity and their own decisions about eating and physical activity.”

All of the site coordinators expressed how easy it was to implement the MSY Program and curriculum. To them, “the materials provided and the assistance available reassured them that they could implement without fail.”

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The middle school developmental stage is awkward for most sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders. According to Ms. Keller, “Kids at this age can be insecure, self-centered, scared to do something wrong, and feel like the whole world is watching them.” She observed that activities that engaged the whole group of youth equally worked best, rather than activities that might shine the light on only one student.

“I was proud of how the kids handled themselves.”

Katie Keller, Coordinator

Ms. Keller adapted the MSY Program so that most of the time was spent doing hands-on activities. The field trips also were definitely a highlight of the program for both kids and school administrators, who remarked on the “connection made to real-world applications and career forethought.” Participants in her group took a field trip to Generous Garden, a nonprofit garden that grows organic produce and provides food to homeless shelters and food pantries. MSY participants worked in the gardens.

For Ms. Keller, working on the *Big Production* with the youth participants was both a challenge and a success. It was through this activity that she was able to see what the youth had learned. Participants developed a newscast with interviews about the importance of physical activity and that being active can include vacuuming your home and is not necessarily confined to activities such as running or playing soccer. “I was proud of how the kids handled themselves,” Ms. Keller noted.

Working in a school setting can be challenging, especially when trying to retain participation and interest among adolescents. Sometimes, the after-school program at Tanglewood Middle School was cancelled because of a PTA meeting, Spring Fling, or spring break. This affected the time available to complete the *Big Production*. Furthermore, after-school participation tends to fall off later in the school year. Ms. Barnes explained, “Students are in spring sports, and they like to go outside. Parents are worn out, too.”

In addition, because Tanglewood Middle School had recently received a poor rating by the state department of education, the principal decided against holding any field trips during the regular school day so that students could focus on academics. This affected the ability of MSY participants to visit a local television news station, as the station could only accommodate a visit from the students in the morning.

Facilitators reported that kids had difficulty understanding the vocabulary in the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys. Specifically, “many students didn’t know what some of the words were and therefore had many questions and concerns about taking the ‘test.’”

Scheduling conflicts also came into play when implementing the MSY Program. Ms. Keller noted that she needed more time than anticipated to fit in the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys as well as the *Big Production*. She also did not have time to take the supermarket field trip.

Ms. Keller recommended extending the MSY Program to 12 or 14 lessons. Her advice to future MSY Program coordinators is to “be flexible, know your audience, and sustain kids’ attention.”

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

Ms. Barnes suggested providing additional and more creative activity ideas to the list of MSY Program *Action Breaks* and advised future facilitators to “be prepared to adapt and change [the lessons].” She also suggested implementing the MSY Program in the fall, when after-school participation is at its highest, or during the summer. She added that although “the lessons are highly engaging, [they] were sometimes repetitive and therefore could have been condensed.”

“The students were able to make the connection between negative media portrayals of food and activity with their own decisions about eating and physical activity.”

Ashlee Barnes, Facilitator

Ms. Barnes also commented that she would teach the MSY Program again as she “loves showing students how to eat healthy—a lot of kids don’t have a clue. I tell them, ‘You know better, you do better,’ and ‘Knowledge is power.’” She concluded, “Children really enjoyed the program. I think every session was successful.”

Looking Ahead

CIS of Greenville will seek funding to be able to use the MSY Program curriculum again in fall 2013.

COORDINATED CHILD CARE OF PINELLAS, INC., PINELLAS PARK, FLORIDA

Background

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc. (CCC) implemented the MSY Program at eight 21st Century Community Learning Centers (seven of which are on school properties and one at a community recreational center located across from a middle school). 21st Century Community Learning Centers, funded by the Florida Department of Education, provide academic enrichment opportunities during nonschool hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools, usually Title I schools. (Title I schools are those with high numbers of children from low-income families that receive federal funds to help ensure that all children meet state academic standards.) Because CCC had already written MSY into the 21st Century curriculum for this fiscal year, youth were already enrolled in the program; therefore, no specific recruitment for MSY was necessary. In all, 161 youth completed the entire MSY Program.

CCC involved numerous partners in the implementation of the program, including the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, YMCA of the Suncoast, YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg, R'Club Child Care, City of St. Petersburg, and Walter Fuller Recreation Center. CCC contracted with these partners to implement the MSY Program in school cafeterias, on basketball courts, outdoors, or in open space. Certified teachers facilitated the program by breaking the large group of youth enrolled at each learning center into small groups of 10 to 12 participants each.

Rebecca Albert, research analyst at the Juvenile Welfare Board and consultant for the CCC MSY Program, noticed a trend. Initially, during the first few monthly meetings with site directors, concern was raised related to the MSY Program creating additional work for the learning center staff (especially given existing workloads). However, once site directors realized that youth were eager to participate and the MSY curriculum was straightforward to implement, their initial resistance vanished.

Demographic Snapshot

Pinellas Park, FL

City founded by Philadelphia publisher F.A. Davis

Home to Tampa Bay Automobile Museum and Tampa Bay History Center

Total population: 49,079

89.04% White/Caucasian
2.09% Black/African American
4.25% Asian American
0.39% American Indian
6.26% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$35,048

Mission

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc., facilitates the availability of affordable, accessible, high-quality early education and care and related school-age programs by acting as a primary resource in Pinellas County for children, families, providers, and employers.

"Kids have been really excited to be part of the MSY Program like we've never seen before."

Rebecca Albert, Coordinator

Program Implementation

CCC implemented the MSY Program at: (1) Walter Fuller Recreation Center (a community-based center in St. Petersburg), (2) Bay Point Middle School (St. Petersburg), (3) Dunedin Highland Middle School (Dunedin), (4) Largo Middle School (Largo), (5) Morgan-Fitzgerald Middle School (Largo), (6) Oak Grove Middle School (Clearwater), (7) Tarpon Springs Middle School (Tarpon Springs), and (8) Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School (St. Petersburg). At each site, at least 15 youth, ages 11 to 13 years, attended the entire MSY Program.

CCC trained eight certified teachers and eight site directors to use the MSY Program curriculum.

At all eight sites, CCC implemented the MSY Program to enhance current youth activities during the 21st Century academic enrichment segment through ten 1-hour lessons, Monday through Thursday. During the MSY Program, youth participants retrieved food commercials from the Internet and analyzed their messages; identified whole-grain foods; sampled foods; tried different forms of physical activity and competitions; calculated their heart rates; created healthy grocery shopping lists and menus; measured serving portions; prepared food; reviewed magazine, radio, and newspaper ads; and dined with family members.

Youth ideas executed during the *Big Production*, across the eight sites, included a video to promote an active lifestyle among teens; a painted banner; a fitness video and a skit about healthy eating; a short video and PowerPoint presentation on MSY; a video of students engaged in visual, dramatic, and musical presentations; posters; a video of a song written by students; and a commercial advertising healthy choices. CCC will disseminate the *Big Production* creations via CCC's website, Facebook page, and Twitter. In addition, CCC will post the full-size banner created by the students in the front lobby and submit a press release on the CCC's MSY Program.

Facilitators expressed the need for more time to implement the 10 MSY lesson plans, as well as a desire to begin the program earlier in the school year.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

The youth enjoyed the *Action Breaks*, *Snack Breaks*, and *Mini-Productions*.

The nutrition component of the MSY Program stood out most for the youth. Participants tried new snacks that they typically would not buy at the store or have at home. They were surprised how tasty a healthy snack can be, such as trail mix, dried apples, and yogurt.

Youth seemed to *least* enjoy the lessons about grains and reading food labels.

Feedback from facilitators indicated that “kids have been really excited to be part of the MSY Program like we’ve never seen before.” Ms. Albert shared that kids in the MSY Program have shown more enthusiasm than they have for other related programs. She attributes the unique excitement around the MSY Program to the positive staff attitude that no extra work would be required, MSY activities being packaged as “project-based learning” or “disguised learning” (youth learn while

having fun), and a different outlet for youth—particularly because 21st Century grantees are firmly focused on academics.

Even though parents/guardians had provided consent for their children to attend general programming, CCC required an additional MSY consent form. This added another layer in the process as parents sometimes became confused and sought additional clarification. Moreover, such communication needed to be clear for Spanish- and Creole-speaking families. Yet, the overall consensus was that “parents seemed to like that their child/children enjoyed the healthy food.” One site reported that “parents allowed their child/children to stay later than normal, so that the student could participate in the MSY lessons.”

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

Ms. Albert explained that CCC would have opened the program to more youth “had they had more time.” She plans on offering the MSY Program again next school year and hopes more youth, sites, and schools will take part. Still, she noted that the MSY Program has competitors and recommended providing grantees—or providing funding for grantees—to develop large posters and other signage to hang in cafeterias and other places in schools to visibly and attractively promote the MSY Program, so that this program can stand out even more.

Ms. Albert offered the following advice to future MSY facilitators: “It is important to have community partners, and this includes *business* partners like your local grocery stores—so, not just government agencies and schools, but businesses as well. Health and nutrition are so important that I think MSY can be integrated into existing schoolwide educational components like language arts and math.”

Looking Ahead

CCC plans to sustain the MSY Program by continuing to require that it be part of the 21st Century lesson requirements. CCC will implement the MSY Program again during the first quarter of the 2013–2014 academic year. CCC will include parental consent forms in the 21st Century enrollment packet and collect them at the time of program registration.

EMPOWER (ENCOURAGING PREVENTION WITH EDUCATION AND RESOURCES) SOMERSET, SOMERVILLE, NEW JERSEY

Background

The population of small town Somerville, New Jersey, is fairly diverse. EmPoWER (Encouraging Prevention With Education and Resources) Somerset—the lead organization for the Central Jersey Coordinated School Health Program—offers programs for people of all ages to assist them—through education, collaboration, and linking to resources—in making positive lifestyle choices. Youth in the central New Jersey area took part in one MSY Program session for free at a Middle Earth after-school program (held at Smalley Middle School, Bound Brook). Middle Earth is a 21st Century learning program that serves students in fourth grade through entering eighth grade from Bound Brook and South Bound Brook. EmPoWER also offered two MSY sessions at the Somerville YMCA—both as an after-school program and a 6-day intensive spring break program. The Somerville YMCA setting offered a swimming pool, fitness center with exercise equipment, gymnasium, and classrooms.

Kristen Schiro, school health specialist and MSY Program coordinator, used multiple tactics to recruit community partners and participants for the MSY Program. She had a discussion with the YMCA CEO; made a presentation to local middle schools with Coordinated School Health Programs, published an announcement in EmPoWER's newsletter, reached out to Girl Scout troops, and sent MSY Program information to middle schoolers and their parents via emails and flyers sent home in students' backpacks. Ms. Schiro offered a gift card raffle to encourage youth attendance at meetings to promote the program. Nurses also referred youth who they thought could benefit from nutrition and physical activity lessons.

Ruth Prothero, school health specialist for EmPoWER Somerset, facilitated two sessions of the MSY Program. Both groups of youth participants reflected Somerville's racial/ethnic composition. With regard to gender demographics, the first group was composed of all girls (one boy had signed up for the session but dropped out) and the second group was composed of about two-thirds girls and one-third boys.

Program Implementation

Somerville YMCA After-School Program. During the Somerville YMCA weekly MSY sessions, students met for 2½ hours. Staff allotted 2 hours for MSY lessons, with the remaining time for extended physical activity. Students discussed ideas for the *Big Production* and voted on the form it

Demographic Snapshot

Somerville, NJ

The name "Somerville" was taken from four brothers from County Cork, Ireland.

Home of Paul Robeson, actor, athlete, bass-baritone concert singer, and civil rights activist

Total population: 12,098

65.64% White/Caucasian
12.15% Black/African American
11.37% Asian American
0.34% American Indian
23.75% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$69,836

Mission

EmPoWER Somerset assists individuals and families with making positive lifestyle choices and fosters healthy, drug-free communities through education, collaboration, and linkages to resources.

would take during MSY lesson 9. Staff incorporated the *Big Production* into 1 hour of MSY lesson 10. The Somerville weekly group created brochures and posters reflecting what they learned during the course of the MSY Program. The facilitator worked with Repro, Inc., a print media production company, to professionally produce the brochures and posters. Staff gave each student copies of their work to distribute in their respective schools and communities.

Somerville YMCA Spring Break. At the Somerville YMCA spring break, the MSY lessons were run for 3 hours a day over 6 consecutive days. Staff allotted each MSY lesson 2 hours, enabling plenty of extended physical activity time. Students discussed ideas for the *Big Production* and voted on the form it would take during MSY lesson 9. Staff incorporated the *Big Production* into 1 hour of MSY lesson 10. Spring break students worked in groups to produce short video vignettes, later shown to the larger group.

Middle Earth. At Smalley Middle School's Middle Earth program, students created a short video on healthy eating. This site's facilitator worked with Premiere Media, LLC to edit the video and then distributed the video to each MSY student. Students showed the video at a Middle Earth parent night.

EmPoWER Somerset featured MSY in its e-newsletter distributed to over 800 community members and partners in Somerset County.

Staff reported that while the MSY Program was easy to follow, it was labor intensive specifically with respect to preparing for *Snack Breaks*. They also said time management was an issue when administering the pre- and post-curriculum assessment surveys, fitting in activities within recommended time slots, and completing a lesson within 90 minutes. Because of limited time during session 10, staff did not administer the post-curriculum assessment surveys. Moreover, managing the group of students during the instructional components of the lessons was sometimes challenging as kids had difficulty focusing after having been in school all day.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

Youth especially liked the *Snack Breaks*; the grocery store trip; and being involved in the filming aspects.

Ms. Prothero reported that youth liked the *Snack Breaks* because they were able to put together their own snacks, including making their own wraps using fresh fruits and vegetables. They especially enjoyed the fruit tasting at the beginning of the MSY Program. Youth (especially the boys) also had fun participating in the *Action Breaks*, particularly the participants in the Somerville YMCA groups, as they had access to the swimming pool and gym.

"The more the kids could be involved, the more engaged they were."

Ruth Prothero, Facilitator

The community reacted positively to the MSY Program. Staff reported how "the program was a great complement to the Coordinated School Health grant that EmPoWER Somerset oversees for the Central New Jersey region."

Participants *least* enjoyed the media activities that involved writing blogs and paperwork. “The more the kids could be involved, the more engaged they were,” shared Ms. Prothero.

The Coordinated School Health program manager at the New Jersey Department of Health reported being excited to include MSY as a tool to encourage physical activity and healthy nutrition in schools. Directors at the MSY facilities have encouraged EmPoWER Somerset to continue the MSY Program in their organizations as a result of the “extremely positive response from parents and youth.”

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Ms. Schiro had to adapt her original MSY Program implementation plan by switching from partnering with the Hillsborough YMCA to collaborating with the Somerville YMCA, because the Hillsborough YMCA had a limited number of students in the 10- to 13-year age range enrolled in the after-school program at the time. Other challenges included not having sufficient time to complete the *Big Production* on the last day or to integrate the pre- or post-curriculum assessment surveys during the first and last lessons, respectively. In fact, youth were “bored” on the first day when they ended up spending about 30 minutes completing the pre-curriculum assessment survey (it is estimated to take 15 minutes to complete). And there was no time left at the end of the program to complete the post-curriculum assessment survey.

In fact, Ms. Prothero did not have enough time to complete the *Big Production* during her first session of the 6-day spring break camp. Because of this, she changed the medium of the *Big Production* creation from video to print during her second weekly group (these participants developed a brochure and posters). The second group worked with a local woman who owns her own print media production company, Repro, Inc. This woman helped participants create the trifold and posters. Youth distributed the trifold and posters at libraries, schools, and the YMCA. Ms. Prothero commented, “The print media worked better. The kids enjoyed it and took something from it.”

With respect to other ways the MSY Program had to be adapted, Ms. Prothero had to adjust certain physical activities for students at lower levels of fitness. In addition, she had to modify snacks for youth with food allergies. Despite the challenge, kids really enjoyed the *Snack Breaks* and the grocery store trip. Facilitators reported that the kids loved walking to the store and being outside.

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

Ms. Prothero’s greatest success was in the relationship she nurtured via email with the parents of MSY Program participants. She sent weekly updates to parents summarizing what their children had accomplished the prior week and plans for the next week’s activities. She received positive feedback from parents and believes that the MSY Program ran smoothly because of this parent buy-in and regular communication.

Ms. Schiro’s advice to future MSY Program coordinators and facilitators is to start working on the *Big Production* earlier and realize that it is challenging to complete the entire curriculum, as is, in 10 lessons over a 10-week period. Ms. Schiro suggested the possibility of adding an extra week with the cautionary note that youth may not be able to sustain interest for that period. She reflected, “Ten

weeks may be too long—middle school-aged children began getting distracted toward the end, especially with repetitive concepts.”

Based on her experience facilitating the program, Ms. Prothero agreed that 10 weeks was “too long” and that the “repetitiveness of some of the material made it hard to keep the kids engaged.” She suggested condensing the MSY Program to 6 weeks and compensating by lengthening the time of each lesson. In conclusion, Ms. Prothero advised future facilitators to “really be prepared and think on your feet during the lessons” and “try to engage parents.” She added, “It helps if you’re an experienced teacher.”

Looking Ahead

Because EmPoWER Somerset was able to utilize matching funds from other sources, it will be able to sustain the MSY Program. EmPoWER Somerset is also exploring a fee-for-service model for a spring break camp during the 2013–2014 academic year.

EmPoWER Somerset continues to nourish its partnerships with YMCA and Middle Earth so that both organizations can continue to implement the MSY Program as a regular offering in their after-school programs.

GIRLS INC. OF SOUTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT, WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

Background

Girls Inc. traditionally serves mostly inner-city youth from low-income families, with targeted outreach to girls affiliated with the Department of Children and Families and in foster care.

Girls Inc. had initially intended to collaborate with a middle school in Stamford, Connecticut, but when that commitment could not be confirmed, the organization approached principals at other Connecticut schools with which it had previous ties. These schools included Tyrrell Middle School in Wolcott, Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut, and Rochambeau Middle School in Southbury. To gain interest from these schools, Alysse Fraser, program manager and MSY Program coordinator, made a presentation to the school principal and created a short video about the MSY Program as one way to promote enrollment.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

Pam Laliberte, program coordinator and MSY Program facilitator, implemented the program at Tyrrell Middle School with sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade girls. Wolcott is a middle-income community town. The girls who participated in the program are primarily white/Caucasian.

For girls in Ms. Laliberte's group, the media component of the MSY Program was the most age appropriate and well received. She stated, "The girls loved the *Mini-Productions* as they 100-percent created their own skits, plays, scripts, songs, and ads instead of my telling them what to do." Participants requested performing their productions at school but time ran out.

Ms. Laliberte's group took a field trip to a local cable television company where participants learned how to hold a camera and what it is like to be on camera. Girls in the MSY Program who were also in a Media Maven program got the opportunity to speak with a local reporter and a local photographer about the MSY topics that they were learning. "One fact the girls will never, ever forget is that the average amount of time spent a day on media is 8 hours and 40 minutes. This includes television, videos, texting, YouTube, computer, Facebook, Instagram, and any other social media," shared Ms. Laliberte. This fact was proven to be true when participants logged their own daily media exposure.

In contrast, these girls "were not as interested in the nutrition" component of the MSY Program. "That's probably because they eat whatever their parents give them. They don't have much of a

Demographic Snapshot

Waterbury, CT

The city was the leading center for the manufacture of brassware and hence nicknamed the "Brass City."

W1XBS was one of four radio stations in the country to begin experimental high-fidelity broadcasting in 1934.

Total population: 110,366

58.8% White/Caucasian
20.1% Black/African American
1.8% Asian American
0.6% American Indian
31.2% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$40,254

Mission

The mission of Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut is to empower all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

"The girls loved the Big Production. They wanted to continue dancing."

Alysse Fraser, Coordinator

choice on that matter,” conjectured Ms. Laliberte. For example, the girls were *not* interested in either drawing the nutrition super hero or in the whole-grain kernel diagram. That said, participants learned to read Nutrition Facts labels, such as examining the number of servings in a package. Before this activity, for example, girls mistakenly assumed that the “4 grams of fat” listed on a food label referred to the amount of fat in an entire package rather than a single serving.

The girls worked well together in groups, especially on the *Big Production*. Facilitators reported that “favorite projects among the youth were creating a mock fan page on nutrition and creating jingles and billboards.”

“The girls loved the Mini-Productions as they 100-percent created their own skits, plays, scripts, songs, and ads instead of my telling them what to do.”

Pam Laliberte, Facilitator

Program Implementation

Staff implemented the MSY lessons in the Tyrrell Middle School’s and Rochambeau Middle School’s cafeterias and theater rooms (includes a stage) and the Middle School Room at Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut. Rochambeau students occasionally went outdoors to perform *Action Breaks* and productions on the school’s field.

For each site, Girls Inc. allocated 10 weeks at 2 hours each day to the program. Staff added 2 extra days at Tyrell Middle School to accommodate the larger number of girls and the field trip to a local media site.

Tyrell Middle School. At Tyrell, the girls developed two skits and a song. Some of the girls helped off stage with directing and taping. Tyrell girls took a field trip to a local media center, Skye Cables, in Waterbury. They learned about the operations of camera angles, being on screen, and voice.

Rochambeau Middle School. At Rochambeau, the girls wrote a song. Because not all parents submitted signed release forms, only two of the four girls sang the song in the video.

Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut. At Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut, the girls produced a healthy living poster PSA on health and fitness.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Because of competing sports activities toward the end of the first round of the program, 10 girls had to discontinue the MSY Program as they could not miss their practices. During spring, schools are extremely busy with their own activities, and parents often register their children in programs in advance of the spring season.

Ms. Fraser feels her greatest success during the MSY Program thus far is in the recruitment of participants (all girls). A Girls Inc. facilitator spent 2 days during Tyrrell Middle School’s lunch wave personally visiting girls and explaining the MSY Program to them, generating excitement. This facilitator also set up a table in the lunchroom where girls could get information, ask questions, and pick up flyers to take home to their parents. This face-to-face, one-on-one interaction with the

girls resulted in 22 girls signing up for the first round of the MSY Program. Ms. Fraser suggested that the MSY Program curriculum offer creative ideas for enticing youth to join the program.

For the *Snack Breaks*, Ms. Fraser and her team improvised on some of the recipes to make the preparation easier and reduce costs. Moreover, the Tyrrell classroom was not large enough to comfortably hold all girls who signed up for the first round of the program, and Ms. Fraser's team had to adapt to this physical limitation.

Ms. Laliberte's principal challenge was the time needed to prepare snacks in advance of the sessions. Preparation included shopping for food, washing food (which she had to do at her home), and preparing various dishes for one snack (e.g., carrots and dip, peaches, granola, yogurt, tortillas, turkey, mozzarella). With 25 youth in her group, this preparation process became cumbersome. She likewise modified some of the snacks because she had to travel to another town to purchase snacks in bulk (there is no main supermarket in Wolcott), and sometimes certain ingredients were not available in bulk. As a result, she had to improvise a few recipes.

Recommendations for Future Implementation of the Program

Ms. Fraser offered the following advice to future coordinators: "Plan ahead, start early, set aside sufficient time to train the facilitators, and don't run all three programs at once." She concluded with, "We think the Media-Smart Youth Program is a wonderful program, and it ties in really well with the mission of Girls Inc. The most important thing is to be a healthy and happy person and accept yourself as who you are." Ms. Laliberte echoed, "I like the Media-Smart Youth curriculum. I learned a lot. And the media part is worth repeating."

Looking Ahead

Girls Inc. will be presenting the MSY Program curriculum to its affiliates in the United States and Canada as a program that Girls Inc. can offer them. Locally, Girls Inc. will continue to offer the MSY Program as an after-school program at the schools and sites in which it has already implemented MSY.

Girls Inc. ran two summer camps (2013) that incorporated MSY Program ideas related to healthy snacks, *Action Breaks*, and media activities.

Toward the end of summer 2013, Girls Inc. met with administrators at new schools and sites to promote the MSY Program. Girls Inc. has already met with a local middle school that focuses on performing arts—this school offers an ideal space to create future *Big Productions*. Girls Inc. has also discussed the idea of engaging high school students as mentors to MSY Program's middle school girls. Mentors would teach MSY participants how to use media equipment supplied by the school.

KID POWER, INC., WASHINGTON, D.C.

Background

Through many different grants and a variety of programs, Kid Power, Inc., serves about 350 low-income students in grades two through eight in Washington, D.C. About 80 percent of youth served are African American, 16 percent Hispanic/Latino, 2 percent African, and 2 percent Asian and other. Most of the youth come from low-income, single-parent households. The concepts undergirding the MSY Program are consistent with those of Kid Power, particularly those relating to lack of awareness of and access to fresh food.

Because Kid Power's MSY Programs all occurred in school settings (equipped with kitchens and garden beds), recruitment was not as much of an issue as was generating excitement about the program. Patrick DiSalvo, middle school director and MSY Program coordinator, used innovative "selling points," such as explaining that fruit kabobs are fun to make and healthy, as well as reminding youth why whole-wheat quesadillas are a healthier choice.

Bailey Schrock, coordinator at Chavez Prep and MSY Program facilitator, taught one session of the MSY Program at a middle school located in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C., a heavily Hispanic/Latino community. Her sixth- and seventh-grade MSY students were mostly bilingual (many with monolingual parents) and from low- to lower middle-income families.

Program Implementation

Kid Power staff implemented the MSY Program, with youth already enrolled in Kid Power's daily after-school program, at four locations: (1) Cesar Chavez Prep (Columbia Heights neighborhood), (2) Prospect Learning Center (Benning Road neighborhood), (3) Jefferson Middle School (Southwest Waterfront neighborhood), and (4) Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School (Petworth community).

MSY staff included Kid Power site coordinators, Kid Power site associates (college-age students through the Federal Work Study Program), an American University film group, a part-time video consultant, and volunteers.

Staff communicated the details of the MSY Program to parents, teachers, and students through Kid Power's monthly newsletter and flyers at each site. Key MSY facilitators recruited parents to

Demographic Snapshot

Washington, D.C.

Capital of the United States

Home to the National Mall, Lincoln Memorial, U.S. Capitol, Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, White House, National World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, and Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Total population: 632,323

38.5% White/Caucasian
50.7% Black/African American
3.5% Asian American
0.3% American Indian
9.1% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$61,835

Mission

Kid Power is a civics-based organization that provides academic, nutritional, and service-learning opportunities for 350 youth (ages 7–18) in underserved neighborhoods in the District of Columbia (Wards 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8).

"The final product was a parody of the song, 'Sexy and I Know It,' which was changed to, 'Healthy and I Know It.'"

Bailey Schrock, Facilitator

participate in several MSY lessons, which increased families' understanding of the MSY Program's key topics and their adoption of healthy habits and media awareness at home.

At each of the four sites, staff implemented MSY lessons twice a week in 35- to 45-minute segments over 12 to 14 weeks. Staff slightly modified the MSY schedule to allow students to participate in mandatory after-school "academic power-hour" and dinner required by the schools. Students at each site worked on their *Big Production* for 2 weeks.

Staff implemented the MSY lessons in classroom settings, occasionally using larger gyms and cafeterias for review games and physical activities. Often, staff delivered a lesson introduction to the whole group and then divided the group into small groups matched by grade and academic skill. When students became restless, staff increased small group instruction and hands-on activities, including gardening. The Jefferson Middle School site participated in Global Youth Service day, where MSY youth taught 100 outside students about healthy vegetables and fruits and their nutritional value.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

Youth participants most liked the *Big Production*, for which they created a parody of the song "Sexy and I Know It" by changing the lyrics to "Healthy and I Know It." Program participants each identified an area in which they excelled in developing the *Big Production*, including writing lyrics, running cameras, acting, and singing. Students from the American University film school also assisted with the program's *Mini-Productions*. They showed program participants how to use production equipment, the process of production, how they can change production details, and what "b-roll" is and how to use it. The college students filmed MSY participants dancing their own interpretation of the "Harlem Shake."

MSY Program participants liked having visual references, so Ms. Schrock brought some of her own media examples. She also invented a freeze tag game where each time she asked the students to "freeze," she stated aloud a high-fat and high-sugar food. The students then had to generate a healthier food alternative. Some participants enjoyed the media aspects of MSY, including considering how often they interact with media on a daily basis and matching logos with companies (the latter was an activity that Ms. Schrock put together). Participants enjoyed sharing and demonstrating their "hidden" daily physical activities, such as when they walk to school.

Youth participants *least* enjoyed the whole-grain activity where they moved across the room to act out the milling process ("it was too simplified"). Also, students were very tired one day because they had earlier taken the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System standardized test. This made it difficult for youth to sit or focus on explanations. "The after-school setting is a challenge at times. They've been listening to teachers all day long. They are ready to play," explained Ms. Schrock.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Mr. DiSalvo learned that the most useful partners are people with whom Kid Power already collaborates. Schools with an established relationship with Kid Power offered their facilities, teachers at these schools offered to help, and volunteers assisted with MSY Program facilitation. One example that illuminates how an established partner can help spread MSY messages is a station that participants set up during Global Youth Service Day 2013 (a day of service dedicated to youth). These participants ran one MSY game where players reached into a bag to feel and smell fruits and vegetables and tried to guess the contents without looking. The youth took this game a step further by conducting research on interesting factoids that they relayed to players during the game. One fact that the participants found on their own, for example, was, “A kiwi has three times the amount of vitamin C than does an orange.” Youth enjoyed sharing such information with event attendees. Mr. DiSalvo exclaimed, “This youth-initiated activity shared MSY messages to 100 peers!”

“This Global Youth Service Day youth-initiated activity shared Media-Smart Youth messages to 100 peers!”

Patrick DiSalvo, Coordinator

Mr. DiSalvo noted that youth are “already good at using media, but *analyzing* media was new to them.” One participant returned to a later session sharing that he had observed that less healthy cereal is packaged in bright colors and placed at a person’s eye level at the supermarket. Youth enjoyed analyzing food labels and YouTube videos of fast food commercials. Physical activity “is always successful,” and Mr. DiSalvo had to adapt the physical activity lessons to include more of them, given that youth had been in school all day. He also adapted the nutrition lessons to make them less discussion-heavy and more about self-discovery. For example, Mr. DiSalvo and his staff printed Nutrition Facts labels from whole-wheat products (e.g., brown rice, wheat pasta) and refined products (e.g., white bread), cut them into pieces, and placed them into an envelope. Youth had to assemble the separate pieces by matching healthy parts together and less healthy parts together, like a jigsaw puzzle.

Even though Ms. Schrock had a 2-hour time slot with students, 30 minutes were dedicated to homework and 30 minutes were committed to free time. The MSY Program, moreover, had to be integrated with other curricula requirements as well as enrichment classes, including yoga, dance, and soccer. Therefore, the facilitator devoted no more than 60 minutes to each MSY lesson. Ms. Schrock purposefully shortened each MSY lesson to maintain students’ attention. She explained, “The students got restless during a lot of the talking points and statistics in the introductions. I had to paraphrase and summarize the paragraphs so we could get to the moving and doing. To maintain students’ attention, they need to be more active.”

Because enough chaperones were not available for a trip to a local supermarket, Ms. Schrock modified this activity by bringing supermarket items to the youth to examine after school.

Her greatest success was in facilitating a media conversation on examples of media and reasons people use those media. Ms. Schrock believed this discussion went well because it provided an opportunity for youth to showcase their knowledge of movies, social media, and the Internet in general.

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

Mr. DiSalvo thinks that peer teaching and building on existing programs and campaigns (e.g., recycling, composting) across numerous small-scale grants is the way to spread MSY messages. “This is how the word gets spread from a classroom of 20 to 25 kids to 200 kids.” His advice to future MSY Program coordinators includes thoroughly reviewing the curriculum, figuring out ways to tailor the curriculum to one’s unique youth population, and integrating hands-on and youth-initiated activities into the lessons, even if this means cutting an MSY lesson short.

Ms. Schrock observed that 90 minutes is “a very long lesson for students in an after-school program” and recommended that each MSY lesson be structured around 40 minutes to meet the needs of sixth- and seventh-graders. She also recommended “breaking down the *Big Production*” because she found it to be “a bit overwhelming.” Ms. Schrock plans to teach certain MSY facts and ideas in the future by integrating them into other curricula. She thinks that the MSY Program would be most successful if implemented during the regular school day, such as in an exercise and nutrition science class, at summer school/camp, or spring break. Her advice to future MSY facilitators: “I suggest that they make sure they’re familiar with the materials and be able to make adjustments on short notice. Something always comes up with students.”

Looking Ahead

On June 26, 2013, Kid Power’s Executive Director presented MSY Program outcomes and shared the website link at a community meeting hosted by the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates and with representatives of at least 15 leaders of nonprofit organizations.

Kid Power extended MSY lessons into 2013 summer activities and will integrate them into the 2013–2014 academic year. Kid Power is going to supplement its VeggieTime curriculum with some of MSY’s materials and activities, particularly those relating to media, whole grains, and food labels. Kid Power has secured funds from the Subaru Foundation and the Harry Chapin Foundation to continue to integrate these sections of the MSY Program with its VeggieTime program.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY HEALTH ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN, LANSING, MICHIGAN

Background

The School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan (SCHA-MI) represents and supports school-based and school-linked health centers with a 60 percent presence in urban areas. The school-based and school-linked health centers serve at-risk youth residing in medically underserved areas, including rural Michigan. While the program for school-based health has been in the state for 25 years, SCHA-MI, Lansing, has been in operation for 9 years.

Before submitting a grant application, Robin Turner, consultant to the SCHA-MI and MSY Program coordinator, secured commitments from three local communities (affiliated with two health departments and one hospital) to participate. “By intent and design,” the three communities represent rural, suburban, and urban areas. Once funded, the three communities were ready to begin recruiting youth participants. Ms. Turner knew that “passive recruitment,” such as a letter mailing, would not be effective, and she suggested that each of the three communities identify a “trusted person to make the ‘ask’ from within.” This is exactly what happened at one of the communities. Using a robocall system, the school principal personally left a message promoting the MSY Program to every student’s parent/guardian. Only five kids had been recruited before this strategy; 16 kids signed up immediately after the robocall message.

Denise Cykiert, registered dietitian and nutrition educator at Botsford Hospital, facilitated the MSY Program with 15 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders at Pierce Middle School in Redford Charter Township (a low-income area west of Detroit). The majority of this school’s student population has been classified as overweight. The student body comprises a mix of races and ethnicities, with a high proportion of African American students. Ms. Cykiert delivered the MSY Program in the patient waiting area of the school-based health center that partners with Botsford Hospital. She and the participants prepared and consumed snacks in Ms. Cykiert’s mini-conference room office.

This was Ms. Cykiert’s second time implementing the MSY Program. Through the requirements of a state of Michigan grant, she had to identify an evidence-based program and found the MSY Program while researching appropriate programs on the Internet. She facilitated the MSY Program for the first time in 2011 and “really enjoyed the content.” Given this previous experience, Ms. Cykiert felt better prepared to facilitate it again a second time, now in 2013. “The Media-Smart Youth Program is put together really well,” she stated.

Demographic Snapshot

Lansing, MI

Capital of Michigan

Home to Michigan State University, General Motors, Magic Johnson, and Malcolm X

Total population: 114,297

61.2% White/Caucasian
23.7% Black/African American
3.7% Asian American
0.8% American Indian
12.5% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$35,774

Mission

The School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan’s mission is to improve the health and educational outcomes of children and youth by advancing and advocating for school-based and school-linked health care.

Program Implementation

SCHA-MI staff implemented MSY lessons at: (1) Pierce Middle School-Based Health Center (South Redford), (2) Durand Middle School (Durand), and (3) Sawyer Salvation Army Rec Center at the Marquette County Health Department (Upper Peninsula of Michigan).

Pierce Middle School. The Pierce Middle School site met each Tuesday, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., February 26, 2013, through May 14, 2013, at the school-based health center (affiliated with Botsford Hospital). Depending on availability, youth used the health center waiting room or the school's hallways. Youth spent approximately 3 weeks working on the trifold *Big Production* poster board (coupled with working at home and during lunch for final touches of the display to be showcased at Project Voice, a statewide youth conference held in Flint, Michigan). The display contained images of celebrities, health foods, and youth participating in physical activities. The display board was surrounded by flashing lights.

Durand Middle School. The Durand Middle School site met once a week for 10 weeks for 1½ hours from February through May 2013. For the *Big Production*, youth videotaped a portion of each lesson and spent 3 hours editing the video for a final 3-minute production for use at Project Voice. To create the video, youth used a computer and camcorder.

Marquette. The Marquette site, complete with kitchen facilities and a gym, ran the program Monday through Friday, 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., June 17, 2013, through June 28, 2013, after serving lunch. Students created a poster with the message “Eating Healthy – Be Active!” and included photos of healthy fruit and vegetable and physical activity choices. It will hang in the dining room where the Free Summer Lunch program is served.

MSY Program facilitators reported that the program is flexible enough “that no one felt left out or lost because they missed a day.”

Staff sent information about the progress of the MSY Program at this site via the monthly SCHA-MI listserv's Clinicians' Digest and Mental Health Digest.

MSY participants shared their three sites' *Big Productions* at the SCHA-MI Project Voice conference in spring 2013. The Marquette site also presented their creations to the local Health Council. Staff will post photos of each site's *Big Production* on social media sites and SCHA-MI's website as a featured video of the day.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Ms. Cykiert's most gratifying moment was witnessing the participants developing and completing the *Big Production*—a very large trifold poster board with content about physical activity. On this poster, youth had incorporated something from each MSY lesson. As one example, participants created a comic strip featuring an overweight middle schooler who lost weight as he

“On this poster, youth had incorporated something from each Media-Smart Youth lesson.”

Denise Cykiert, Facilitator

followed daily physical activity recommendations. “I could see that the students had really been paying attention!” said Ms. Cykiert.

Participants also loved the physical activity aspects of the program and “wanted to run around all the time.” One youth remarked, “I love MSY! It’s so cool, especially the trip to Flint. It was educational.”

Ms. Turner heard MSY participants say, “I don’t want it to be over,” and “What do you mean it’s over?” indicating that youth had a fun time with the MSY Program. She would like to offer the MSY Program again to a set of different communities. However, she explained, “The hardest part is the recruitment.” She scheduled monthly calls with her three community partners as an opportunity to check in. Looking back, she wishes she had engaged in shorter (15-minute) and more frequent (weekly instead of monthly) calls to troubleshoot youth recruitment and retention strategies.

Out of the three communities, Marquette experienced the greatest challenges implementing the program as a result of inclement weather. For four Mondays in a row, schools closed because of snow. Schools also closed 3 days in a row due to ice. To intensify matters, high-level school personnel turnover delayed MSY Program planning and implementation efforts at this school. As a result, this site held the MSY Program as an after-school activity during the first week in June 2013—shortly before school ended for the year.

Ms. Cykiert’s greatest challenges included making sure she had sufficient time so as not to rush or skip over material and managing students’ behavior. She elaborated, “I would love to teach the MSY Program again, but it is a lot of work. I spent at least 3 hours of preparation time for each lesson—this includes shopping for food and preparing the snacks to making copies and posters each week.” Furthermore, because the MSY Program is structured in 15- or 10-minute activity segments where participants are asked to switch from one activity to the next, Ms. Cykiert observed, “In reality, that’s not how middle schoolers work. They’re not running like soldiers.” She underscored, “The Media-Smart Youth Program is perfect under best behavior circumstances.”

Ms. Cykiert also did not have luck when reaching out to potential partners. She had reached out to local schools for assistance with media needs, including borrowing equipment, and offered students at other schools opportunities to practice leadership skills by mentoring MSY Program participants, but she received no feedback on these outreach attempts. For example, Ms. Cykiert did not have a laptop to play the MSY curriculum’s CD.

Recommendations for Future Implementations of the Program

Because of student attention problems during MSY lessons, Ms. Cykiert thinks the MSY Program is optimally designed for older youth, such as seventh- and eighth-graders instead of sixth-graders. Although she found the number of lessons (10) to be appropriate, Ms. Cykiert recommends shortening each lesson from 90 minutes to 60 minutes to sustain youth’s attention (particularly in an after-school setting). She also suggested offering the program during a regular school day or summer camp, when students are prepared to pay attention more.

Looking Ahead

This grantee's project coordinator, Ms. Turner, described the MSY curriculum at a mental health training in Detroit, attended by eight social workers and dietitians. There, Ms. Turner loaned an extra copy of the MSY curriculum for use by a site at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Durand Middle School will use the MSY Program again in academic year 2013–2014.

Ms. Turner reported that the KI Sawyer coalition, composed of community leaders, clergy, health professionals, school staff, parents, and local organizations from the Gwinn community, has built partnerships among the health department, recreation center, and coalition and is committed to making KI Sawyer a healthier community (one of the most at-risk communities in the Upper Peninsula and Marquette area).

SCHA-MI will continue to offer the MSY curriculum in its resource library, free of charge. It will also continue to publish articles on MSY in its digests and offer information about MSY through its mental health network of providers in Michigan. SCHA-MI is presenting a poster on MSY at the Michigan Department of Community Health, Child and Adolescent Health Center Program, Annual Conference, October 13–14, 2013.

Last but not least, through the experience implementing the MSY Program, SCHA-MI's youth developed relationships with health center staff. The intention is for youth to educate peers about MSY messages through word of mouth.

YWCA EL PASO DEL NORTE REGION, EL PASO, TEXAS

Background

The population of El Paso, Texas, is predominantly (almost 90 percent) Hispanic/Latino—with most residents having emigrated from Mexico (many from Chihuahua). The annual median income for a household of four (with commonly monolingual Spanish-speaking heads of households) is approximately \$32,000. In addition, the median age is young, at 31 years. The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region primarily serves the city of El Paso (in addition to a couple of other counties in Texas and one county in New Mexico). The YWCA is in 12 lines of business—from child care to credit counseling—and its Teen Leadership Program implemented the MSY Program with mostly bilingual youth, ages 11 to 18 years, at risk for truancy, dropping out, and gang membership. The YWCA is committed to transmitting the ideals of leadership, racial justice, life planning, and educational goals to the youth it serves.

Program Implementation

YWCA El Paso del Norte Region staff implemented the MSY Program at four diverse sites throughout the city of El Paso: (1) *Latinitas, Inc.* (a nonprofit organization that focuses on empowering teenage girls through the extensive use of media), (2) Wiggs Middle School (Central El Paso), (3) YWCA Transitional Living Center (offers shelter and transitional housing to 39 homeless families in Central El Paso), and (4) The Housing Authority of the City of El Paso, Haymon Krupp Memorial Complex (East El Paso).

Latinitas, Inc. *Latinitas* staff, in partnership with the Housing Authority of El Paso, implemented the MSY Program during a 1-week spring break camp, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., March 18, 2013, through March 22, 2013, at its headquarters. This site was ideally suited for the MSY Program implementation as it houses digital cameras, laptops, and photography equipment. At this site, the facilitator edited each lesson down to 1 hour, with two lessons per day. During the camp, small media lessons ranged from making a commercial that promotes fitness or healthy food choices, to creating a Zumba dance video, taking photos, and writing/blogging. Staff packaged the food portion of each lesson as lunch and a snack-to-go at the end of the day. Staff incorporated the fitness activities as an icebreaker in the morning and as a game after lunch. Youth worked on the *Big Production* every day for 30 to 45 minutes. Students took turns being the photographer and wrote in their journals at least once a day about topics such as one of the lessons, steps for each cooking lesson, media, and/or a health issue. *Latinitas'* interns typed the students' entries and posted them as blogs every day as well as compiled a newsletter with journal entries and photos. This site also took a field trip to the local *Univisión* station. The coordinator at this site, a "social media wizard," volunteered with the *Latinitas* online magazine and engaged youth in online blogs and YWCA service learning projects.

Demographic Snapshot

El Paso, TX

The El Paso region has had human settlement for thousands of years, with the earliest known cultures being maize farmers.

More than 70 Fortune 500 companies have offices in El Paso, including Hoover, Eureka, Boeing, and Delphi.

Total population: 649,121

80.84% White/Caucasian
3.39% Black/African American
1.18% Asian American
0.73% American Indian
86.62% Hispanic/Latino of any race

Median household income: \$32,124

Mission

The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

Wiggs Middle School. Wiggs Middle School staff implemented the MSY Program, alternating Monday, Wednesday, and Friday one week and Tuesday and Thursday the following week, from January 15, 2013, through February 4, 2013, in a gym/locker-room classroom. The activities took place before the school day began, with many youth eating breakfast during the MSY Program. For the *Big Production*, youth created a poster-sized billboard that they presented at the school's monthly assembly. The coordinator at this site holds a degree in kinesiology and has past experience as a YWCA youth fitness coordinator and fitness instructor. The physical education teacher/health teacher and coach assisted the MSY Program coordinator with activities.

YWCA Transitional Living Center. YWCA Transitional Living Center staff implemented the MSY Program daily, after school from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the shelter from March 25, 2013, through April 25, 2013. The coordinator at this site is pursuing a degree in social work. The coordinator said it took between 4 and 6 hours per lesson to price materials, obtain budget approvals, and shop. Youth completed the *Big Production* during three lessons after the final lesson. For the *Big Production*, youth participants created a video clip on the idea of how teens should incorporate and encourage other teens to be active and to practice healthy eating choices. Supplies utilized during the *Big Production* included a camcorder, butcher paper, decorating supplies, empty snack packages, and costumes provided by the participants. A child advocate provided assistance throughout the MSY Program.

The Housing Authority of the City of El Paso. Wanda Navarro Rivera, Teen Leadership Program coordinator and MSY Program facilitator, delivered the MSY Program at this site. The housing authority residential community comprises low-income Hispanic/Latino families from Mexico, with parents/guardians who are primarily monolingual Spanish speakers and their children mostly bilingual. These families are in transitional homes while they await opportunities to purchase a home.

Ms. Rivera implemented the MSY Program at the Haymon Krupp Memorial Complex of the Housing Authority of the City of El Paso. She offered the MSY Program in 10 sessions from April 1, 2013, through April 16, 2013, Monday through Friday, from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., although more often than not the lessons ran till 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. Fortunately, parents/guardians were able to pick up their children easily, as the facilitator held all activities in the same apartment complex (specifically, in a conference room and patio areas). The *Big Production*—a “Kids Food Network” television show creating snacks with attractive ingredients modeled after the *Top Chef Quickfire Challenge*—was included in one of the 10 sessions, with preparation time taken from the previous lesson. Youth recorded the *Big Production* with a digital camera and edited it with nonprofessional software. Youth at this site also took a field trip to the local *Telemundo* news station whose crew supported the MSY group in doing an in-studio production.

Ms. Rivera remarked that because the MSY Program curriculum “includes icons and objectives, it was really easy and simple to follow.” She has a background in Spanish-language television (in production) and radio (as a reporter), and this experience helped her in her facilitation efforts.

“The word ‘exercise’ can be scary. The games changed the kids’ opinion about exercise. They could see how physical activity could be fun. It was very impactful.”

Wanda Navarro Rivera, Facilitator

A parent of one of the MSY Program participants helped Ms. Rivera throughout the program, especially in rallying youth to arrive on time.

Youth and Community Response to the Media-Smart Youth Program

Youth participants most enjoyed the many options available for the *Action Breaks*. Ms. Rivera shared, “The word ‘exercise’ can be scary. The games changed the kids’ opinion about exercise. They could see how physical activity could be fun. It was very impactful.”

Indeed, she believes this change of perspective among the youth was her greatest success. Participants also enjoyed the snacks. Ms. Rivera commented, “The kids didn’t know that they would enjoy healthy snacks.” Youth had never tried quesadillas made with whole-wheat tortillas. They added hot sauce and found them tasty. Participants also liked drawing their nutrition superheroes.

“Unquestionably, the key to the success in implementing the MSY Program was establishing community partnerships.”

Elke Cumming, Coordinator

MSY Program participants walked to the local *Telemundo* television station where they observed different aspects of a live news show including pre-production, editing, and post-production activities. They met with reporters and were on air, live, during the weather segment to answer a couple of questions about the MSY Program. Participants created their own fictitious “Food Network Kids” video, modeling their skit after the food competition television show “Chopped.” For the video, participants used “on-air” and “camera” signs to simulate a real television station. Wearing chef hats, they prepared different dishes with whole-wheat tortillas, including pizza and wraps. “They took this very seriously and were really excited,” said Ms. Rivera. Unfortunately, the group could have used more time for the *Big Production*. She added that two or three sessions would have been ideal to allot for the *Big Production*, instead of one session.

Participants *least* enjoyed the scavenger hunt as they found it “kind of boring.” Ms. Rivera suspects this might have to do with the small type on the Nutrition Facts labels for bread, milk, and other products. Moreover, youth did not understand some of the vocabulary words in the MSY Program lessons, such as “weight-bearing.” Ms. Rivera had to define such words and held all sessions in both English and Spanish, translating in real time. She believes the MSY Program is ideally suited for 13- and 14-year-olds instead of 11- to 13-year-olds, given differences in attention span, maturity, and comfort with technical content.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

In their experience, the program staff members think the curriculum is best presented in 75- to 90-minute sessions. *Action Breaks* at the beginning and perhaps an additional very short break in the middle are best to allow the kids to expend energy and mitigate boredom and distraction. Inclusion of a media partner made a huge impact for the *Big Production* segment, in terms of the learning experience and overall quality of the production. Working with professionals also adds a career exploration component to the program, as the experience allows the youth to learn about career options and motivates them to graduate from high school and have a plan for the future.

The health instructor at the school-based site informed youth about the MSY Program and posted flyers to notify parents. The coordinator at the housing authority residential site (Ms. Rivera) has a

wonderful rapport with youth and spread information about MSY through word of mouth. Because some of the older teens at the housing authority residential site are responsible for babysitting their younger siblings, volunteers cared for the younger children to free up older teens' time to participate in MSY lessons. YWCA staff engaged homeless shelter parents so that they would support MSY as an evening program for their children.

The Latinitas media camp site observed that 13- and 14-year-olds were more engaged in the structured MSY Program than were the older 16-year-old teens. The facilitator addressed this challenge by engaging the older teens as volunteer leaders who guided their younger peers.

Middle-school boys tend to stick together and middle-school girls tend to stick together, and boys' and girls' maturity levels are different. This also made for a bit of awkwardness initially.

Ms. Rivera's greatest challenge was the lack of sufficient time to complete the *Big Production*.

Looking Ahead

Demand for MSY in the El Paso area has increased since the program's inception. Counselors, coaches, and school nurses meet monthly and share best practices and programming. As word about the program has spread in this manner and through positive press coverage, schools have begun asking how they can get MSY into their own facilities.

Because there are only four YWCA staff persons who can dedicate their time to programs like MSY, Elke Cumming, special assistant to the CEO and MSY Program coordinator, has offered to train community stakeholders (e.g., school districts), for free, on how to implement MSY.

The Housing Authority Community services team, El Paso Independent School District's Communities In Schools counselors, Centro Salud Familiar La Fe, and subcontractors in the city's Community Youth Development grant have all shown interest in receiving training prior to the 2013–2014 academic year. In response to this interest, the YWCA offered a half-day facilitator training session to interested partners in June 2013.

The YWCA Teen Leadership program will continue to implement MSY as part of its offerings in El Paso middle schools and after-school clubs. The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region found the MSY Program to be “flexible enough to deliver in a variety of settings and with youth from a variety of backgrounds.” Partnering investigators at the University of Texas at El Paso, who observed the MSY curricula in action and are seeking models for youth education on nutrition and exercise, have included the YWCA and MSY in two proposals currently being reviewed by federal funders.

Ms. Cumming's advice to future coordinators is to secure initial buy-in from staff during the application submission stage, take time to train staff so that they understand and embrace the MSY Program, and, very importantly, tie MSY lessons into existing programming.

Ms. Rivera's advice to future facilitators is to “try to make everything engaging and fun as well as be ready to adapt according to your site.”

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWER GUIDE FOR PROJECT COORDINATORS

As you know from my email correspondence with you, my name is _____. The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (“the NICHD”), the sponsor of the Media-Smart Youth (MSY) Program, has asked that I speak with some of the MSY Program’s site coordinators and facilitators to learn more about the program’s implementation at your site. Your “in the field” feedback will help the NICHD improve the MSY Program and therefore make it easier to implement, in the future, for site coordinators like you.

Our interview will last about 30 minutes. If there is a question you prefer not to answer, just let me know, and we will proceed to the next question. I am an independent researcher—I had nothing to do with the development of the MSY Program, so please feel free to be as honest as possible. To be clear, I am seeking your feedback on your experience conducting the program within the particular context of your organization, community, and youth population served—I am *not* evaluating the success or failure of the implementation of the program. Because I am going to write individual vignettes for each of the 10 grantees, I am going to include the name of the grantee organization and its city and state; therefore, it will be easy to identify the grantees in the vignettes. Please let me know whether I may or may not include your first and last name, as well as your professional title, in your particular vignettes.

Do I have your permission to audio-record the interview so I can refer to the audio recording for my note taking?

Background Questions for Context

1. Briefly, tell me about the community/communities that you serve.

MSY Program Promotion, Youth Recruitment, and Site Coordination

1. How did you recruit youth to take part in the MSY Program?
2. What approach worked best to recruit youth participants?
3. How did you obtain permission from participants’ parents/guardians for the youth?
4. Please describe any organizations (e.g., local agency, school, or other facility) with which you partnered to implement the MSY Program?
 - 4a. What were the roles and/or responsibilities of these organizations?
 - 4b. If you partnered with a local agency, how did you secure the sites/facilities in which to hold MSY Program activities? [Probe: How many sites did you secure?]
 - 4c. Where specifically did the MSY Program activities occur (e.g., school, classroom, or gymnasium)?
5. How, if at all, did this environment affect the sessions?

Youth Response to MSY Program and Program Outcomes

1. How did participants respond to each of the three components of the MSY Program—nutrition, physical activity, and media skills?
[Probe: Was one component better received than the others? Was one component less well received than the others? Why? Did one component offer information that was *new and different* for program participants compared with other components? If so, what was new and different for program participants—what had they not seen before?]
2. After the program began, did you observe any increased demand for the program from the community?
 - 2a. If yes, how did you respond to this increased growth/demand?
3. Did you experience any decrease in youth participation?
 - 3a. If yes, why do you think this happened?

Overall Successes, Challenges, and Need for Adapting

1. Please describe an instance where you felt your MSY Program coordination efforts were successful.
 - 1a. What do you think were the reasons for the success?
2. Please describe an instance where you felt you were *not* successful in your coordination of the program.
 - 2a. What do you think were the reasons for this challenge?
 - 2b. How, if at all, could you have better coordinated this portion of the program?
3. How, if at all, did you have to adapt your original MSY Program implementation plan?
[Probe: Number of youth actually recruited/community demand for program; how far money went for supplies; local organizations interested/not interested in partnering; actual capacity of sites secured for program implementation.]

MSY Program Support and Conference Calls

1. What did you think of the program training provided at the Bethesda, Maryland, meeting in December 2012?
[Probe: How, if at all, did the training help you to implement the program? What did you find most valuable about the training? What could have been improved?]
2. What was your experience facilitating the train-the-trainer session with organization staff and partners?
[Probe: Was the training well received? Did you feel that the training in Bethesda amply prepared you to conduct the train-the-trainer? What went well? What could have been improved?]
3. What do you think about the monthly grantee conference calls?
[Probe: How, if at all, have they been helpful? How could they have been improved? What kind of camaraderie, if any, did you develop with other grantees?]

Possible Future Funding

1. Are you interested in implementing the program again in the future?
 - 1a. If yes, would you require additional resources to do so?
 - 1b. If yes, how much funding would it take for you to implement the program again?

Close

1. What advice would you share with another organization or coordinator that is planning to implement the MSY Program?
2. Those are all of my prepared questions. But, before we end, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview. Your feedback will help the NICHD improve its efforts to widely disseminate the program and institutionalize it within various communities.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWER GUIDE FOR PROGRAM FACILITATORS

As you know from my email correspondence with you, my name is _____. The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (“the NICHD”), the sponsor of the Media-Smart Youth (MSY) Program, has asked that I speak with some of the MSY Program’s site coordinators and facilitators to learn more about the program’s implementation at your site. Your “in the field” feedback will help the NICHD improve the MSY Program and therefore make it easier to implement, in the future, for site facilitators like you.

Our interview will last about 30 minutes. If there is a question you prefer not to answer, just let me know, and we will proceed to the next question. I am an independent researcher—I had nothing to do with the development of the MSY Program, so please feel free to be as honest as possible. To be clear, I am seeking your feedback on your experience facilitating the program within the particular context of your organization, community, and youth population served—I am *not* evaluating the success or failure of the implementation of the program. Because I am going to write individual mini vignettes for each of the 10 grantees, I am going to include the name of the grantee organization and its city and state; therefore, it will be easy to identify the grantees in the vignettes. Please let me know whether I may or may not include your first and last name, as well as your professional title, in your particular vignette.

Do I have your permission to audio-record the interview so I can refer to the audio recording for my note taking?

Background Questions for Context

1. Briefly, tell me about the community/communities that you serve.

MSY Program Curriculum

1. What was your experience facilitating the MSY Program?
2. What is your opinion about the time allotted for the program lessons?
[Probe: Please tell me what lessons, if any, you would allot more or less time to and why.]
3. How well do you think the program materials serve to help program participants think critically about media and its effect on their nutrition and physical activity choices?

MSY Program Activities

1. In your opinion, what MSY Program activities did the program participants enjoy *most*?
[Listen for/probe for differences between the nutrition, physical activity, and media analysis and media production sessions/topics.]
2. What MSY Program activities did the program participants enjoy *least*?
[Listen for/probe for differences between the nutrition, physical activity, and media analysis sessions/topics.]

3. What was your experience facilitating the *Big Production*?
[Probe: Did you have ample time to prepare for the *Big Production*? What media product did the youth create? How did the youth respond to developing the *Big Production*?]
4. How, if at all, did you involve local media outlets (e.g., television station, radio station, newspaper, or community newsletter) in the MSY Program?
 - 4a. Which media outlets did you include?
5. How, if at all, did you involve parents/guardians of the program participants in the MSY Program?

MSY Program Facilitation: Successes, Challenges, and Need for Adapting

1. Did you receive training to facilitate the MSY Program?
 - 1a. If so, how were you trained for this program?
 - 1b. What did you think of the training?
2. How well do you feel you were prepared to facilitate this program?
3. Please describe an instance where you felt your MSY Program facilitation efforts were successful.
 - 3a. What do you think were the reasons for this success?
4. Please describe an instance where you felt you were *not* successful in your facilitation of the program.
 - 4a. What do you think were the reasons for this challenge?
 - 4b. How, if at all, could you have better facilitated this portion of the program?
5. How, if at all, did you have to adapt the program, or specific lessons, along the way?
[Probe: Number of youth actually recruited/community demand for program; how far money went for supplies; local organizations interested/not interested in partnering; actual capacity of sites secured for program implementation; modified aspects so that the program would be more culturally relevant to program participants; modified aspects so that the program would match the technology that program participants are able to access and the technology that participants actually use.]

MSY Program Feasibility

1. How inclined are you to teach the MSY Program again in the future?
[Probe: Is it a program that you would choose to facilitate again?]
 - 1a. Why/why not?

Close

1. What advice would you share with another facilitator that is planning to implement the MSY Program?
2. Those are all of my prepared questions. But, before we end, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview. Your feedback will help the NICHD improve its efforts to widely disseminate the program and institutionalize it within various communities.

APPENDIX C: GRANTEE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Organization	Location	Population(s) Served	Brief Description of Implementation Plan	Implementation Sites
The Alice Aycock Poe Center (Poe Center) for Health Education	Raleigh, NC	Youth in Raleigh, NC, metro area	In-school (Wake Young) and after-school program incorporated into regular program offerings.	1) Ligon Middle School – 22 low-income sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders 2) Wake Young Women’s Leadership Academy – 32 sixth-grade young ladies 3) Zebulon Boys & Girls Club – 19 sixth- and seventh-graders
Alkebu-lan Village	Detroit, MI	Detroit east side, youth ages 5-18, low-income, "at-risk"	After-school program incorporated into organization’s existing programming; once/week lessons from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	1) Alkebu-lan Village *Implementation will occur as three different sessions offered at the same site.
Boys & Girls Clubs of El Paso	El Paso, TX	South El Paso, majority Mexican-American youth population (92%), low-income	After-school program incorporated into organization’s existing programming; implemented in two phases: Phase I - curriculum (2-3 weeks); Phase II - <i>Big Production</i> (2 weeks).	1) Club Janacek (east El Paso) 2) Club Travis Petty (south El Paso) 3) Club Delta* (east-central El Paso) *Program took place in two cycles at Club Delta.
Communities In Schools of Greenville	Greenville, SC	Greenville County public school students, low-income families	MSY Program will be incorporated into the organization’s existing programming in schools.	1) Greer Middle School (east Greenville) 2) Lakeview Middle School (west Greenville) 3) Tanglewood Middle School (west Greenville) (all Greenville County public schools)
Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc.	Pinellas Park, FL	Middle school youth attending low-performing schools with high poverty rates (based on a number of indicators) in Pinellas County, FL	After-school programming in middle schools and a community-based recreation center will serve as a component of the 21st Century Community Learning Center, a comprehensive youth development program funded by the Florida Department of Education.	Seven middle school sites and one community-based recreation center 1) Walter Fuller Recreation Center 2) Bay Point Middle School 3) Dunedin Highland Middle School 4) Largo Middle School 5) Morgan-Fitzgerald Middle School 6) Oak Grove Middle School 7) Tarpon Springs Middle School 8) Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School
Encouraging Prevention With Education and Resources (EmPoWER) Somerset	Somerville, NJ	Youth in Central New Jersey area, Hispanic/Latino youth, low-income	After-school program offered once a week for 10 consecutive weeks at each site.	1) Somerville YMCA 2) Smalley Middle School 3) Somerville YMCA - Spring Break Camp

Organization	Location	Population(s) Served	Brief Description of Implementation Plan	Implementation Sites
Girls Inc. of Southwestern Connecticut	Waterbury, CT Wolcott, CT Southbury, CT	Girls ages 11 to 13 years from southwestern Connecticut communities	After-school program implemented alongside an existing media literacy program, <i>Take Another Look</i> ; program will run 1 day a week.	1) Tyrrell Middle School - Wolcott, CT 2) Girls Inc. of Southwest Connecticut Middle School – Waterbury, CT 3) Rochambeau Middle School – Southbury, CT
Kid Power, Inc.	Washington, DC	Demographic breakdown of youth served: African American (80%), Latino (16%), African (2%), Asian and other (2%)	After-school program provided at least twice a week.	1) Cesar Chavez Prep 2) Prospect Learning Center 3) Jefferson Middle School 4) Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School
School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan	Statewide (Michigan)	Rural, suburban, and urban public school students statewide	Provided through school-based health centers.	Three middle school-based health centers: 1) Pierce Middle School - Detroit area 2) Durand Middle School 3) Sawyer Salvation Army Rec Center at the Marquette County Health Department
YWCA El Paso del Norte Region	El Paso, TX	Predominately Hispanic/Latino youth (80%) in northeast El Paso	1) In-school program in middle schools 2) Community-based program in public housing complexes.	1) Latinitas, Inc. 2) Wiggs Middle School 3) YWCA Transitional Living Center 4) The Housing Authority of the City of El Paso - Haymon Krupp Memorial Complex