

## Pilot: School based family engagement strategy to increase “Food Hero” health behaviors at home

Alyssa Gaiser, MPH<sup>1</sup>; Richard Lau MPH, RD<sup>2</sup>; Tina DodgeVera, MPH<sup>3</sup>; Brooke Jackson, BS<sup>3</sup>; Lauren Tobey, MS, RD<sup>3</sup>; <sup>1</sup> College of Public Health and Human Sciences; <sup>2</sup> College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Nutrition PhD Candidate, Dietetic Intern; <sup>3</sup> College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Extension Family and Community Health, Oregon State University

### Background

Food Hero is a social marketing campaign that also provides education and policy, systems and environmental change activities aimed at increasing all forms of fruit and vegetable (FV) consumption among low-income Oregon families to ultimately lower obesity. The campaign is guided in part by the social cognitive theory.

When Food Hero works with schools, one aim is to increase healthy behaviors at school and home. Oregon children have low FV intake (Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2016). This project’s objective is to engage students and their families in positive health behaviors at home during spring break and then promote/model the results at school after spring break.

### Methods

A Spanish/English BINGO card was created to promote comprehensive wellness. The card included 24 tasks covering healthy eating (14), physical activity (7), and less screen time (3). A large group of tasks (11) included health behaviors promoted within Food Hero. All tasks were designed to be achievable and replicable by low-income families, and desirable to be reported by schools as collective successes.

The card was piloted at 4 elementary schools (average 70% free/reduced school lunch enrollment), located 2-15 miles apart. A card was given to each student the week before spring break (n= 1,617). Parents were asked to initial a task (bingo square) when completed. Students who completed  $\geq 5$  tasks and returned the cards to their classroom teacher  $\leq 10$  days post spring break received a cutting board to reinforce the efforts.

### Results

- 201 cards returned (17% Spanish/83% English).
- Respondents: 128 boys/75 girls; mean age: 7.63y (range 5-11y).
- 13% response rate (15% boys, 10% girls).
- ~25% (n=45) reported completing the card with a sibling; 52% non response to the sibling question.
- 3,025 total tasks reported, covering all 24 tasks.
- On average, 15 tasks per card were initialed; only 8 cards had the lower limit of 5 tasks initialed.

### Spring Break 2017

#### Food Hero Health Behaviors Reported

- ✓ 187 breakfasts eaten
- ✓ 185 family dinners eaten together
- ✓ 144 students ate a cup of fruit for a snack
- ✓ 113 students helped set the table
- ✓ 112 students ate 1 cup of vegetables
- ✓ 108 students shared a fruit with a friend
- ✓ 99 students helped plan a dinner
- ✓ 89 students made a smoothie with a fruit or vegetable
- ✓ 88 students helped cook a dinner
- ✓ 80 students went grocery shopping and picked out a new vegetable
- ✓ 75 parents/kids visited [FoodHero.org](http://FoodHero.org) together



**Be a Food Hero!**  
**Spring Break Bingo**

OSU Oregon State University Extension Service

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (circle one): Male Female

Instructions: Write your name, teacher and age. Bring back to school by April 7th with at least 5 tasks completed, and receive a **Food Hero surprise!**  
 Did you complete this with a sibling? Yes No Parent/Guardian: When your child completes a task, **initial the task.**

Walk with your family for 15 minutes.	Help set the table.	Have an adult visit <a href="http://www.foodhero.org">www.foodhero.org</a> . Together choose one new recipe to try.	Drink 8 ounces of low-fat milk.	Eat one cup of fruit for a snack.
Make a smoothie with a fruit or veggie in it.	Draw a picture.	Play a game.	Help plan one dinner.	Eat breakfast.
Eat dinner with your family.	Do 60 minutes of physical activity.		Read a book.	Play at a park for 30 minutes.
Go grocery shopping with your family and pick out one new vegetable for everyone to try.	Choose water instead of sugary drinks.	Help cook one dinner.	Jump rope 20 times.	Ride a bike for 30 minutes.
Share fruit with a friend.	Play outside for 20 minutes.	Dance for 20 minutes.	Eat one cup of a vegetable.	Wash your hands before you eat.

### Conclusions and Implications

The pilot supports continued development with refinement, including:

- Make the sibling question more noticeable.
- Work to increase the response rate, i.e., distribute cards to schools 3-weeks prior to break so teachers can assure they go home with children the week before spring break.
- Build in tools/strategies for schools to recognize individual/collective project successes.

**Long-term goal:** Implement this project statewide within Food Hero and beyond, through the Food Hero Community Toolkit:

[www.foodhero.org/community-toolkit](http://www.foodhero.org/community-toolkit).



Thank you Sunrise, South Shore, Garfield and Lincoln Elementary Schools.

Contact Us:  
[Food.Hero@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Food.Hero@oregonstate.edu)