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Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM)
EatPlayGrow Evaluation: Synthesis Report, Phases I-V

Executive Summary

A report presented to:
CMOM

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Overview: In 2009, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) launched its Health Initiative, with the goal of bringing about documented behavioral changes that form the building blocks of healthier lives, and ultimately reduce children’s risk of obesity. As part of this Initiative, CMOM developed *EatPlayGrow (EPG)*—an early childhood anti-obesity curriculum—in partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

To further the impact of this program and create a cost-effective, scalable model, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a two-year grant to CMOM in 2012. The purpose of the grant was to test the efficacy of CMOM’s place-based train-the-trainer model: a six-hour professional development training and complimentary web resource. In this model, Head Start educators in low-income communities in New York City—including the South Bronx and Harlem—receive a six-hour training, access to the *EPG* website, and weekly push emails that link them back to the *EPG* curriculum and other resources on the website. Subsequent to this, these teachers create a one-hour workshop for parents in their communities to educate them on core topics in early childhood anti-obesity health.

In order to meet the evaluative needs for their *EPG* train-the-trainer program, CMOM approached *BLiP Research*—a New York-based research firm specializing in children, education, media, and technology—to conduct a multi-phase research protocol. This document is the narrative summary report from this project.

Methodology: A five-phase qualitative and quantitative research protocol was developed by *BLiP* in coordination with CMOM. This protocol was conducted with 124 teachers and 44 parents/caregivers at participating NYC Head Start programs.

Phase	Methodology	Scope	Sample
I <i>Exploratory</i>	- Review - Pre-Participation IDIs	- Examination of all materials - 6 20-minute Interviews	- 2 <i>BLiP</i> researchers - 6 Teachers and Administrators from participating Head Start sites
II <i>Qualitative Insight</i>	- Training Observation - Mini Focus Group Interviews	- Observation of 2 trainings - 4 15-minute Group Interviews	- 2 6-hour Trainings - 16 Teacher Training Attendees
III <i>Quantitative Testing</i>	- Post-Participation Surveys - Online Surveys - Online Tracking	- All training participants - EPG site users - All EPG site visitors	- 124 completed surveys - 44 completed surveys - 300+ users
IV <i>Qualitative Reflection</i>	- Workshop Observation -- Mini Focus Group Interviews - Follow-Up Interviews	- Observation of 2 workshops - 4 15-minute group interviews - 7 20-minute Interviews	- 2 1.5-hour parent/caregiver workshops - 13 Parents/Caregivers - 7 Teachers
V <i>Quantitative Reflection</i>	-- Online Tracking -- Post-Participation Surveys	- All EPG site visitors - All workshop attendees	- 500+ users - 46 completed surveys

Overall Headline: *EatPlayGrow* Trainings/Site Empower Teachers, Communities

- The *EatPlayGrow* program of trainings and workshops has been shown to be successful in educating participants and empowering them to creatively and compellingly disseminate the information learned in the communities they serve via community workshops—informing and positively affecting behaviors.
- There is also indication that connection to the *EatPlayGrow* curriculum flows out further from there, with people trained in/exposed to the content sharing information, activities, and the website with others in their spheres of influence.
- The core resource for this further dissemination is the *EatPlayGrow* website, which contains a wealth of information, activities, extensions, etc. The website is witnessing a steady and growing rollout, with many original participants in the trainings and workshops visiting or returning or referring others to do so.

Phase I and II Findings:

- Prior to their participation, teachers looked forward to the opportunity to attend the six-hour *EPG* trainings, recognizing the importance of the subject of early childhood obesity—for the students they teach, for the parents/caregivers of these students, for themselves, for their communities.
- Teachers expected the training to cover conventional areas like healthy eating habits, proper portions, and physical activity, but did not anticipate the relevance of proper sleep or bone growth.
- Providing counterintuitive, surprising, and illustrative information and delivering it in a dynamic, participatory, interactive, in-person manner was key in creating a compelling training. The *EPG* training was well aligned in all respects.
- Prior to participating, teachers were concerned about some aspects of the *EPG* training. Happily, the *EPG* training successfully answered these concerns.
 - **Length:** Full-day trainings are often overly detailed and connected to bureaucratic topics like proper methods of official documentation. Teachers found the training fun and engaging.
 - **Format:** Full-day trainings like these are often didactic and bland. A great majority of the training was interactive, participatory, hands-on, and intriguing, containing many fresh discoveries or “ah-ha” moments.
 - **Tech:** The “digital divide” remains. Access to and comfort with the internet is frequently irregular in the schools and communities targeted for the *EPG* training. Introduction to and teacher registration for the *EPG* website via iPads and internet service provided at the trainings by CMOM diminished this issue. However, some ongoing concern/discomfort remained.
 - **Translating Engagement to Behavior:** Even if the topic is compelling, the information presented is often difficult to integrate into teachers’ lives and the lives of members of the communities they serve. The *EPG* workshop provided incentives, encouragements, activities, and “tricks” that were easily and readily applicable to teachers’ lives and those of their constituencies.

Phase III Findings:

Statistical analysis of post-participation surveys demonstrated the training's success:

- **96%** of participants felt that the training successfully informed them of many key issues surrounding early childhood obesity prevention.
- **97%** of participants felt prepared to share what they learned with members of their community—students, parents, caregivers, and others.
- **91%** of participants felt prepared to use the *EatPlayGrow* website.
- **88%** of participants felt that it was likely that they would visit, or still be visiting, the site six months after the training.
- **91%** of participants (on average) found highly useful the various elements that made up the training.
 - The most compelling and memorable portions of the training were those that were interactive, participatory, and/or surprising.
 - The least compelling were those that were didactic and unidirectional.
- **88%** of participants felt that there was a strong likelihood that, six months subsequent to the training, they would be implementing some element of the training in their classrooms.
- The *EatPlayGrow* website has been host to well over **1000** (human) sessions since its introduction in the first quarter of 2014.
- About half of these sessions come from new users, half from returning users, indicating that the site continues to grow and attract new users.
- Users stay on the site for an average of nearly five minutes (**4:48**) during each visit, and visit an average of nearly four different pages (**3.74**) during their time on the site, indicating a depth and breadth of use.
- iPads were used for access during the initial trainings. Yet access to the *EatPlayGrow* website via desktop computers and mobile devices accounts for over **80%** of total visits, indicating that the vast majority of new and returning users are coming to the site subsequent to their participation in the trainings.
- Lesson plans remain the most popular destination on the site, indicating an ongoing interest in accessing and delivering valid and engaging educational content regarding early childhood obesity prevention.
- Based on survey data, a large majority (**68%**) of respondents reported very positive overall interaction with the *EatPlayGrow* website.
 - The most popular motivators for visiting the site included the sourcing of interactive games, activities, lessons, songs, and videos.
- A similarly large majority (**70%**) found themselves able to navigate the site, and find readily what they were looking for, during each visit.
 - The aforementioned digital divide may have impacted on visitors' access and ability to navigate the site readily and successfully.
- **80%** of visitors noted that they had shared the site with friends, family members, and other people in their community.

Phase IV Findings:

Follow-up conversations with teachers—six months after their participation in the six-hour *EatPlayGrow* training—indicated that these trainings were highly:

- **Memorable:** Teachers had strong recall of many aspects of the trainings, especially segments that were interactive and allowed opportunities for themselves and their students to connect directly with information and materials.
- **Compelling:** Teachers remembered fondly many of the activities presented. More important, they often found the information personally relevant and made changes in their own behavior based on their learning.

Observations of and follow-up conversations with parents during and subsequent to their participation in the one-hour, teacher-led *EatPlayGrow* workshops indicate that these community events were highly:

- **Enjoyable:** Attendees exhibited keen focus and interest. Engagement was physically and verbally demonstrated.
- **Accessible:** Attendees were able to take in and comprehend the information presented. This was particularly true of moments and areas in which they were induced to make new discoveries (e.g. the number of teaspoons of sugar in various beverages, how serving size can conflict with package size, experimenting with new healthier foods, etc.)
- **Compelling:** Interactive segments, as well as the trainers'/teachers' energy and interest was motivating—particularly their stories of personal connection to the topic (in terms of challenges and changes they had made in their own lives).
- **Motivating:** After participating, workshop attendees felt certain that they would want, and be prepared, to share information they learned, as well as to gather and disseminate other information on the subject—including on the *EatPlayGrow* website.
- **Extendible:** Attendees were very intrigued by connecting with community groups, organizations, and institutions that could help them to access information on healthier food options, as well as directly to healthier foods.
 - Healthier food options—like fresh, local produce—and straightforward information on the true (and even basic) nutritional value of foods seemed like rich areas for further exploration. (Some of this is intended to be integrated into a Community Mapping section on the *EatPlayGrow* website.)

Phase V Findings:

- **96%** of workshop participants felt that the workshops informed them successfully of some of the key issues surrounding early childhood obesity prevention.
- **98%** of workshop participants felt successfully prepared to share the information they learned at the workshops.
- **78%** of participants (on average) found the various elements of the workshop to be highly useful.
- **85%** of workshop participants found their introduction to the *EatPlayGrow* website highly satisfactory, and sufficient to allow subsequent navigation.
- **75%** of participants felt it was highly likely that they would use the *EatPlayGrow* website subsequent to the training.
- **82%** of participants felt that they would be very likely to still be sharing—six months after the training—the information they learned at the workshops.