



Abstract Title: Food in focus: Youth exploring food in schools

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Introduction

Supporting nutrition is a priority for disease prevention, and schools have been identified as a setting for promotion of healthy eating for youth (Blanck & Kim, 2012). Despite the implementation of food and nutrition policies (Province of Nova Scotia, 2006), youth are challenged by their food environments, yet their perspectives are often excluded (Linton, Edwards, Woodruff, Millstein & Moder, 2014). Participatory approaches, such as Photovoice, offer potential to engage youth in research, policy, and practice (Wang, Yi, Tao & Carovano, 1998) to shed new light on traditional views and enhance intervention impact (Ozer & Wright, 2012).

Objectives

The project aims to: (1) Enable youth to reflect on strengths and concerns in their school food environment; (2) Promote critical dialogue about school food environments, giving voice to student perceptions through visual methods; and (3) Facilitate reaching decision-makers with evidence relevant to youth.

Methods

Photovoice is a specific visual methodology where participants take photos and engage in participatory forms of data collection, analysis, and dissemination. We anticipate two groups of youth taking part from one urban and one rural community, for a total of approximately 12 -16 participants in grades 10-12.

Results

Data collection is currently underway. Participants will take part in a training workshop, and then be given time to take photos reflecting their experiences in their school food environments. Each group will reconvene for analysis, which involves them selecting, contextualizing, and codifying the photos, as a form of participatory thematic analysis. Participatory knowledge translation will be planned that will facilitate youth engagement with decision makers.

Conclusions

School food environments are complex spaces in which youth voices are often unheard. Photovoice allows youth to be engaged through enabling reflection, promoting dialogue, and reaching decision makers and provides an opportunity to transcend traditional research methodologies to access unheard perspectives and generate novel evidence that is also meaningful to the population it concerns.

References

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