

**Health Director's Report
June 8, 2023**

Division / Program: Nutrition / DINE Classroom Garden Kits

(Accreditation Activity 10.2: The local health department shall carry out or assist other agencies in the development, implementation and evaluation of health promotion/disease prevention programs and educational materials targeted to groups identified as at-risk in the community health assessment.)

Program description

- DINE is a school and community-based nutrition education program targeting SNAP-eligible Durham families.
- DINE works with Durham Public Schools (DPS) and community organizations on Farm to School initiatives to promote local food/agriculture, school gardens, and healthy eating. Farm to School encompasses garden, nutrition, and agriculture education, and is a priority for the USDA and SNAP-Ed.
- DINE developed Classroom Garden Kits for students to grow microgreens in the classroom. Microgreens are small edible plants that are harvested before they grow to maturity. The classroom is a great place for microgreens because they do not require a lot of space or materials, and they are ready for harvest in 7-21 days. The kits contain seeds, compost, growing instructions, a spray bottle for watering, student garden journals and curriculum connection resources. The students also receive a packet of seeds and growing instructions so they can continue to grow food at home with their families.

Statement of goals

- To reinforce DINE's nutrition education and behavior change goals, focusing on increasing the consumption of vegetables.
- To increase Farm to School and school garden opportunities in Durham Public Schools.
- To provide a learning activity for teachers to lead that aligns with academic standards across a variety of subjects.

Issues

- **Opportunities**
 - The Classroom Garden Kits enable teachers to practice Farm to School and school garden activities in their classroom rather than depending on a shared school garden space.
 - Hands-on growing projects help students understand where food comes from and increase opportunities to try fresh vegetables.
 - School gardening provides opportunities to connect with any academic subject. Teachers have reported using the kits as part of health/nutrition, science, math, reading, writing, and more.
 - Classroom Garden Kits offer an additional learning opportunity for classes in partner schools that are not receiving the full DINE nutrition curriculum.
 - During this second year offering Classroom Garden Kits, DINE served over twice as many classes and over 60% more students than last year.

- **Challenges**
 - Learning how to grow food takes trial and error and some of the classrooms did not have success with the grow kits on their first try. DINE was able to help with troubleshooting such as providing grow lights and hands-on watering assistance. The information from the post-evaluation will enable DINE to proactively address other common challenges and solutions for next year.
 - The demand for the kits increased significantly this year. DINE was able to meet this need, however, we do not have the staff resources to further increase the number of kits provided next year. Staff time is a main limiting factor.

Implication(s)

- **Outcomes**
 - From February-April 2023, Classroom Garden kits were distributed to 112 classes across 17 schools, reaching 1,921 students.
- **Service delivery**
 - DINE originally developed the Classroom Garden Kits in spring 2022. This year DINE staff created updated kit materials and instructions based on teacher and staff feedback.
 - DINE provided educational reinforcements for the garden kits.
 - DINE staff assembled the garden kits.
 - DINE coordinated garden kit distribution with partner schools and offered consultation to help teachers utilize the kits in their curriculum.
 - DINE created a survey to gather feedback from teachers.
- **Staffing**
 - Four DINE staff (three nutritionists and one processing assistant) led this project through initiation, planning, execution, and evaluation.
 - Six additional DINE nutritionists have supported this project through school outreach and assisting with kit assembly and distribution.
- **Revenue**
 - No revenue was generated.

Next Steps / Mitigation Strategies

- DINE plans to offer Classroom Garden Kits for the third time in the winter/spring 2024.
- DINE will make improvements and updates to the Classroom Garden Kits based on feedback from teachers, school staff and DINE team members.

Division / Program: Population Health / Epidemiology

(Accreditation Activity 38.1: The local board of health shall annually review reports provided by the local health department on the community's health)

Program Description:

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is an anonymous voluntary survey given every 2 years. The YRBS assesses physical health, physical activity, nutrition, safety, bullying, sexual behavior, mental health, substance use, tobacco use, disability, and school support. The 2021 YRBS report contains a new

section on COVID-19 and its impact on students. The 2021 YRBS was conducted in selected Durham County middle and high schools in the Fall of 2021. Data was analyzed by the CDC and the results were put into the 2021 YRBS report to be published in 2023. The 2021 YRBS was conducted in collaboration with Durham Public Schools (DPS), and Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH).

Statement of goals

- Provide a comprehensive set of valid and reliable information about the health of the youth of Durham County.
- Understand the issues Durham County youth are facing.
- Publicize report to different DCoDPH divisions and ensure external partners have the data needed to inform their initiatives and programs.
- Compare 2017 and 2019 (“pre-pandemic”) data to 2021 data to understand the differences in education and student well-being since March 2020.
- Create two infographics, one for middle school and one for high school, to share with the public and partners to provide a quick and easy to follow report of the findings.

Issues

- **Opportunities**
 - Provide data and context regarding disparities to the stakeholders, partners, elected officials, and community residents.
 - Provide a clearer picture of what impacts the health of the youth in Durham County.
 - Focus intentionally on equity.
 - Provide the report in English and Spanish languages.
 - Utilize ‘pre-pandemic’ data to compare to the 2021 YRBS data.
 - Use a representative sample by weighting the data based on the Durham Public Schools population.
- **Challenges**
 - CDC did not provide raw data, so DCoDPH was unable to run our own analysis.
 - Receiving the data in February 2023 pushed the publication out two years after the survey was conducted.

Implication(s)

- **Outcomes**
 - The final report is 28 pages long.
 - 2,685 students participated (1,325 middle schoolers, 1,360 high schoolers).
 - Student participation increased among high school students since 2019.
 - 12 middle schools and 9 high schools participated.
- **Staffing**
 - The epidemiologist reviewed CDC’s analysis and compiled the report.
 - Durham Public Schools distributed and conducted the survey.

- **Revenue**
 - None.

Next Steps / Mitigation Strategies

- Review Spanish translations for the 2021 YRBS report.
- Issue a press release to publicize the report.
- Create and publicize middle school and high school infographics based on the data in the report.
- Hold listening sessions with Durham County youth.