

“What Does Cooking Mean to Kids?”

Using Cognitive Interviews to Assess the Face Validity of an Existing Survey with a New Audience in the Fuel for Fun Program

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Abstract

Objective: To identify what “cooking” means to a convenience sample of Northern Colorado 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students and determine if the survey items in the cooking experience, self-efficacy, and attitudes sections of the Cooking with Kids student survey used in the Colorado State University Fuel for Fun (FFF) project have face validity in this same sample.

Methods: The primary researcher conducted audio-recorded, individual cognitive interviews with children recruited from a summer enrichment program. Based on detailed summaries of interview responses, researchers used content analysis to identify major themes in the cooking experience section and identified comprehension and congruence issues for all survey items.

Results: 24 students were interviewed; 12 girls, 9 3rd graders, 12 4th graders, and 3 5th graders; 83% white and 33% Hispanic. Major themes for participants’ definitions of “cooking” included (in order of most to least frequently mentioned): 1. Meal/food preparation activities not including pre-made/convenience food, 2. Non-baked goods prepared using heat, 3. Baked goods/desserts, 4. Food prepared without using heat, and 5. Heating pre-made convenience food. Overall, children demonstrated comprehension for the majority (>50%) of survey items.

Conclusions and Implications: Children’s definitions for “making food” and “cooking” contained a variety of food preparation methods, including definitions that were both similar and different between the two terms. A major recommendation for the first three survey items about cooking experience is to modify these questions to distinguish between methods of cooking (e.g. baking cookies and cutting vegetables for homemade soup)