

The Development, Implementation and Evaluation of a Blog Tailored to Parents of Children Participating in the Fuel for Fun Program

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To establish and evaluate the use of social media, in the form of a blog, and to facilitate communication with and among Fuel for Fun (FFF) parents about their children's activities within the program; to investigate blog utilization and examine outcomes from blog use, notably measuring communication topic, quality and quantity.

Methods: A blog was created on Wordpress.org and blog posts were drafted using constructs from Social Cognitive, Experiential Learning, and Adult Learning Theories. Drafting and reviewing of blog content was a collaborative effort between the project author, committee, and other Fuel for Fun team members. Facebook blurbs informed parents of new blog content. Posts were delivered approximately weekly to recruited parents of 4th grade students from 4 schools involved in the Fuel for Fun intervention. Descriptive statistics were completed using Google Analytics.

Results: Twenty-seven blog posts were published from November 13, 2013 to May 14, 2014. Blog posts were, on average, approximately 300 words in length, and primarily focused on highlighting FFF lesson content as well as SPARK activities to reinforce the classroom and physical activity components of FFF. Other topics covered in blog posts included money saving tips for grocery shopping, ways to utilize holiday dinner leftovers, how to be physically active indoors and outdoors, and others. Seventy-three parents were invited via e-mail to participate in the blog, and 10 parents (14%) out of all 4 schools consented. No blog posts received comments. Two Facebook posts received comments (both by the same parent), four posts received "like"s, and posts were viewed an average of 3 times. The blogs had an average of 52.33 page views, with an average duration of 56 seconds per page view.

Conclusions and Implications: Given low parent receptivity, the project was ultimately considered an assessment of the feasibility of an initial blog intervention. Recommendations to improve future parent participation include further assessment of parent interest and barriers to participation, asking parents to be involved in the writing of blog content, and posting photographs of the parents' children participating in the Fuel for Fun program.