

START Now Process Evaluation Plan

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Complete and Acceptable Program Delivery

Supporting Teens for A healthieR Tomorrow (START) Now is a high school-based program that targets the primary prevention of obesity and overweight among teens aged 14 to 18 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. The START Now pilot program will be implemented at Penn-Trafford High School (PTHS) during the August 2021 – May 2022 school year. Following pilot program evaluation, START Now may be adapted and extended to other Westmoreland County high schools.

Theoretical Basis

The START Now program is rooted in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and is designed to facilitate behavior change by targeting the individual, interpersonal, an environmental levels of influence per the social ecological model (Contento, 2016). Thus, complete and acceptable delivery of the START Now program has three core components: a nutrition education curriculum designed to increase teens’ knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy around healthy eating and adequate physical activity, a nutrition education component for parents, and a component focused on improving the healthfulness of the school food environment.

The Student Education Component

Individually, adolescents require the functional knowledge and skills to develop healthy habits, along with the self-efficacy to do so (Contento, 2016). The START Now student curriculum will include 12 original, face-to-face, classroom-based lessons across four modules that are focused on healthful eating and increased physical activity. The four modules (Nutrition Fundamentals, Energy Balance, Creating Healthy Meals, and Real Life Choices) will begin with basic knowledge and skills and progress to more complex practice and application. Thus, each 50-minute lesson should be delivered sequentially and as-written, and should be taught by a START Now program facilitator (positioned to students as a “guest expert”). The facilitator will be a member of the START Now staff, and the START Now organization will

be responsible for providing facilitator training, support, and feedback. The curriculum will be delivered during PTHS health classes over a four-week period, with three lessons taught per week. In total, 120 classroom-based lessons will be delivered to 300 PTHS students during the 2021-2022 school year.

The START Now curriculum will be interactive and should promote student engagement both inside and outside of the classroom. For implementation to be considered ideal, a three-week Healthy Habits Challenge must be delivered as part of the curriculum, with kick-off during module two (Energy Balance). This challenge is intended to enhance teens' self-efficacy around healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors, and requires students to set individual SMART goals, track their progress, and offer social support to one another (Contento, 2016). Consistent with SCT, complete and acceptable delivery of the START Now curriculum will also require the following:

- Program facilitators should focus on empowering student participants, and will consistently engage them in a manner that promotes personal agency (Contento, 2016).
- Program facilitators should promote independent decision-making and critical thinking skills among student participants (Contento, 2016).
- Program facilitators should provide students with opportunities for both observational and hands-on learning (Contento, 2016).
- Program facilitators will deliver the knowledge and nutrition literacy that student participants require in order to facilitate healthier eating and physical activity behaviors (Contento, 2016).
- Program facilitators should engage students in activities that promote an understanding of how the environment influences, and is influenced by, their dietary and physical activity behaviors.

Additional details will be provided for program facilitators in the START Now instructor manual.

The Parent Education Component

Interpersonally, teens remain influenced by their family environments and often make dietary choices based on what's available at home. Thus, START Now will also provide adult-directed nutrition

education to encourage the parents of student participants to become actively involved in the program. The parent component will include face-to-face educational sessions and digital newsletters, delivered via email or text. During the PTHS pilot, program staff will deliver 12 adult nutrition education sessions (two sessions per parent) and 1,200 weekly newsletters (four per parent). The 75-minute educational sessions will be held on school grounds outside of regular school hours; three time slot choices should be offered per session, including one weekend option. The parents of students in the START Now program will gain knowledge and skills around healthful eating and physical activity concepts that are relevant to their teens. For implementation to be considered ideal, parents must carry this learning over by making concrete changes to their own home environments.

The Environmental Component

At the environmental level, START Now aims to improve teens' access to healthy food choices at school. The START Now program team will partner with school staff, administrators, food service, and students to identify opportunities to improve the school's food environment. For complete and acceptable delivery of START Now, at least two changes must be implemented in each school that improve the healthfulness of the school food environment. These may include improved food offerings, application of behavioral economics in the school cafeteria, and/or changes to school food policy. Program staff will need to build strong relationships with school personnel to successfully implement this component, and creative solutions may be required.

Additionally, START Now will sponsor the formation of a student-led coalition (one per school) that will advocate for further improvements to the school food environment; this coalition may also help to reshape social norms. START Now program staff will actively promote the coalition, encourage student participation (including one-on-one conversations with promising students), and offer support and guidance to the group once formed.

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	Process-Evaluation Question	Data Sources	Tools/Procedures	Timing of Data Collection	Data Analysis or Synthesis	Reporting
Fidelity	<p>1. To what extent was the student education component implemented as planned?</p> <p>2. To what extent was the parent education component implemented as planned?</p> <p>3. To what extent were changes to the school food environment implemented as planned?</p>	START Now facilitators and other staff, health teachers, and school administrators	Self-reported checklists (program facilitators) and documented observations (other program staff); brief interviews with school administrators and health teachers; school administrator provides written verification of environmental changes	Program facilitators report weekly; other START Now staff observe each class of students once per module, and at least three parent sessions per semester; interviews administered at semester-end; environmental observations and verification at end of each semester	Calculate scores based on percentage of intended characteristics included, inclusive of points outlined in complete and acceptable delivery (Saunders et al., 2005)	Informal weekly feedback provided to facilitators; at semester-end and pilot conclusion, findings summarized in a formal report (overall, by component, and by student classroom)
Dose delivered	<p>4. Did a program facilitator deliver 120 classroom-based nutrition education lessons (12 lessons x 10 classes) to PTHS students?</p> <p>5. Did a program facilitator deliver 12 face-to-face educational sessions to parents/guardians during the PTHS pilot?</p> <p>6. Were four digital newsletters sent to each parent/guardian of a student who participated in the PTHS pilot program?</p>	START Now facilitators and other staff, school administrator, MailChimp, student roster, student and parent attendance records	<p>Program facilitators self-report lessons/sessions delivered using a standardized form; verify with student and parent attendance records</p> <p>Compare student roster to MailChimp record of newsletter distribution</p>	<p>Program facilitators keep daily record of lessons/ sessions; student (head count) and parent (sign-in sheet) attendance records kept for each lesson/session</p> <p>Program staff examine MailChimp data each week that a newsletter is sent</p>	<p>Calculate scores based on number of student and parent lessons delivered vs. plan; use attendance data to confirm implementation as reported by facilitators</p> <p>Calculate score based on percentage of parents sent each newsletter</p>	Facilitators submit weekly reports on lessons/sessions delivered; program staff report number of newsletters sent weekly; at pilot conclusion, all findings summarized in a formal report
Dose received	<p>7. Satisfaction: Did at least 75% of student participants rate their program experience as "good" or better?</p> <p>8. Satisfaction: Did at least 75% of parent participants rate their experience in the in-person sessions as "good" or better?</p> <p>9. Satisfaction: Did at least 90% of school administrators and health teachers rate their satisfaction with the program as "good" or better?</p> <p>10. Exposure: Did parents open and engage with at least 60% of the program-specific digital newsletters that were delivered?</p>	Program staff, students, parents, school administrators, health teachers, and MailChmp	<p>Program staff administer online student survey with satisfaction scales</p> <p>Program staff administer paper parent survey with satisfaction scales</p> <p>Program staff administer paper survey with satisfaction scales and conduct interviews with select staff</p> <p>Program staff use MailChimp to monitor digital newsletter open rate and engagement</p>	<p>Survey administered during the final lesson of the student curriculum</p> <p>Survey administered at the end of parents' 2nd in-person session</p> <p>Survey administered and interviews conducted at semester-end</p> <p>Program staff analyze MailChimp data 1 week after each newsletter is sent</p>	<p>Parent and school personnel survey results entered into computer; numerically code all survey responses and calculate percentage "good" or better; qualitative analysis in themes of interview answers</p> <p>Analyze average open rate and engagement metrics in total and by individual newsletter</p>	Program staff track newsletter metrics weekly; at semester-end (to solve issues) and pilot conclusion, program staff create formal summary report regarding newsletters and satisfaction (student total, parent total, school personnel total, and by lesson/session)
Reach	<p>11. Did 300 PTHS students participate in the START Now classroom curriculum?</p> <p>12. Did a parent/guardian of at least 75% of students in the program participate in two face-to-face educational sessions?</p>	Attendance records from START Now facilitators and health teachers	Health teachers keep student attendance records via a program roster checklist; program facilitators keep parent attendance records through sign-in sheets at in-person sessions	Attendance taken at each in-person program lesson/ session; teachers and facilitators report weekly	Count number of students who participated in full curriculum (11+ lessons); program staff compare parent attendance records with student roster to calculate percentage parent attendance	Teachers and START Now facilitators submit attendance reports on a weekly basis; formal summary report created at pilot conclusion
Recruitment	<p>13. What were the barriers and facilitators to gaining parental engagement in the program?</p> <p>14. What were the barriers and facilitators to recruiting students to form a student-led coalition?</p>	START Now facilitators and other staff, parents, and students	Direct observation by facilitators and other program staff; online student survey with open-ended question(s); text/email parent survey with open-ended question(s)	Program staff observe each class once per module, and at least three parent sessions per semester; student survey administered during final lesson; parent survey administered at end of each semester	Qualitative analysis to identify themes in observed and reported barriers to parent and student recruitment	Formal summary reports created at semester-end (to solve issues) and pilot conclusion
Context	15. Did the school (including administrators, health teachers, and school food service) support implementation of the START Now program?	START Now staff and facilitators, administrators, health teachers, and school food service	Direct observations by program facilitators and other staff; interviews with school personnel	START Now staff document observations bi-weekly; interviews conducted with school personnel at end of each semester	Qualitative analysis to identify themes and barriers to school-level support	At pilot conclusion, formal summary report created regarding school support

References

Contento, I. R. (2016). *Nutrition education: Linking research, theory, and practice* (3rd ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.

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