

Building Your Own Evidence Base: The Story of Healthy NewsWorks

 Moriah Hall, MPH, Research & Evaluation Manager; Samantha Calderone, MPH(c), MPA(c), RDN, LDN, Evaluation Coordinator; Abigail Blauch, MPH(c), Evaluation Coordinator; Marian Uhlman, BA, Executive Director

Introduction/Background

Healthy NewsWorks empowers student journalists to transform the health of their communities. Student reporters encourage healthful living by producing accurate, relevant health media for their fellow students, families, and the wider school community.

Objective

To share some of the unique challenges in conducting on-the-ground program evaluations, using the Healthy NewsWorks program evaluation process as an example.

Methods

► Student reflections:

Student reporters complete a written reflection at the end of each school year, which provides rich qualitative data that is analyzed for themes.

► Story census:

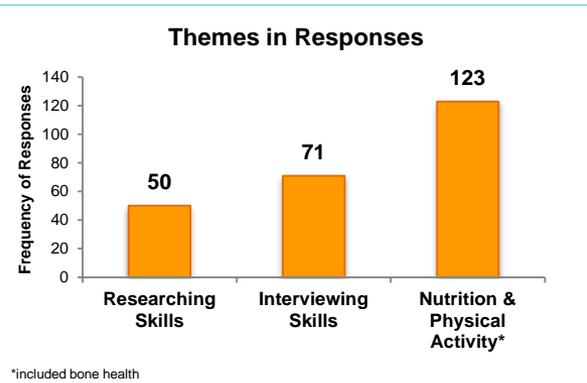
To capture the breadth of health topics across all published newspapers, a story census is conducted annually.

► Pre/post assessments:

Student reporters are given a pre- and post-assessment each year, with questions capturing student knowledge. The pre- and post-assessments are graded for comparison using a standard rubric that was developed by two former educators.

Results

At the end of the school year, students are given the following prompt, **“Please tell us what you learned by being a member of your healthy newspaper this school year. Describe a reporting experience that was meaningful to you and why.”** The graph below depicts the top three themes from students' written reflections:



At the end of the school year, newspapers are reviewed for themes. Results below show the top three themes for each year from 2014-17.



Across all questions on the pre- and post-assessments between 2014-17, student reporters showed improvement on post-assessments in identifying trustworthy information, interviewing skills, and listing a variety of healthy habits.



Additional Findings

Student reflections also provided qualitative responses about program experiences, such as:

- **Trying something new.** *“I experienced my first taste test when I tried the yogurt dip it was so good, I really wanted to have all of it.”* – Third grade student reporter
- **Interviewing experience.** *“I think the experience was fun and interesting for me because it was going around to places and ask people questions about them”* - Eighth grade student reporter
- **The importance of healthy habits.** *“What I learned is every kid needs to stay healthy, fit, and rested”* – Fourth grade student reporter

Discussion & Conclusion

Healthy NewsWorks continues to work toward a replicable model for both urban and rural schools. Years of evaluation data have provided valuable insight into the program that has facilitated improvements and growth.