

2008 Evaluation of the Kids Cafe:  
A Program of the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina  
Sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina  
By Jocelyn D. Taliaferro, PhD  
North Carolina State University  
**Executive Summary**

The goal of the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina's Kids Cafe program is to provide children, who are at risk for hunger, access to nutritious meals in addition to academic and health education in a safe, well-supervised, and easily accessed environment. The FBCENC commissioned a study of its Kids Cafe program as a part of its ongoing evaluation and continuous program improvement efforts. During the months of March – May 2008, surveys were distributed to children, parents, and the directors of the Kids Cafe program. Survey data were analyzed using SPSS and qualitative data were examined using manifest and latent content analysis methods. The sample included 22 sites, 160 parents, and 330 children. This report details the results of the evaluation and will be used by the Food Bank to monitor and enhance the implementation of the program. Below is a report of the findings on each of the program's major areas of focus.

Nutrition Education:

Eighty-four percent of children said they had been taught about the food pyramid. Although, as in previous years, very few children were able to accurately name the food groups. However, they learned about food safety (83%), how to prepare meals (66%), making healthy food choices (92%). Most (86%) tried to apply this knowledge and to make healthier food choices at home and school.

Nutritious Meals:

The majority of parents, 81% and 78% reported choosing healthier foods and snacks respectively. Most parents (81%) were able to cook healthy meals for their family. Like in previous years, parents noticed improvements in their children's eating habits that they attributed to their child's enrollment in the Kids Cafe program. The majority of parents agreed that their student chooses healthier snacks, has good eating habits, and finishes food as a result of participation in the program.

Physical Activity:

The sites also incorporated physical activity into day-to-day operations. All of the programs had at least weekly outdoor play time. All of the sites reported having adequate facilities for children to play. Slightly less than half (42%) of the programs had a gymnasium on site but the majority had outdoor playground equipment and/or used other off-site physical activity

facilities such as local parks and universities to supplement their own physical activity resources.

Academic Enrichment:

All students in the program received grades of C or better. Parents suggested that Kids Cafe improved their child's interest in completing homework and going to school, improved grades, and contributed to school attendance. Children (87%) reported that Kids Cafe helped improve their grades.

Mentoring:

The programs provide children with myriad options to interact and learn social skills. Children often commented on the positive impacts of staff and volunteers who provide individual attention. One child noted "They teach us how to better ourselves and learn how to respect myself and others." Children overwhelmingly (90%) reported feeling good about themselves while at Kids Cafe.

Parental Empowerment:

Parents felt like the Kids Cafe sites kept them informed (89%) and involved (85%). Parents overwhelmingly rated the program as very good (60.3%) or good (32%) and a full (96%) of parents would recommend the program to others.

The Kids Cafe consistently met its program goals of academic enrichment, mentoring, nutrition education, nutritious meals, physical activity, and parental empowerment. Each of these domains received favorable remarks.