

Gabriel's Kitchen

Promoting Healthy Food Choices Among Young Children through Entertainment Media: Storyline and Character Development

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The overall goal of this pilot study was to develop and evaluate characters and storylines for an interactive electronic media show designed to promote healthy food choices among pre- and early elementary school-aged children. We used a puppet show format -- featuring fruits and vegetables as characters -- for this pilot study because it provided a feasible venue through which we could create a narrative, animate the characters, and evaluate children's receptivity to the show's elements before developing the software. This innovative partnership combined the research expertise of faculty from the Hood Center for Children and Families, with the creative team at Hive 5, Inc., a Norwich-based marketing firm with experience in visual and performance art for children.



Our specific aims were: to develop and evaluate the script, storylines, and themes; to create costumes, puppets and sets; and to evaluate children's receptivity to the characters during a live stage performance. In selecting the characters, we chose fruits and vegetables (F/V) that were high in nutrient density and could be consumed raw. The live performance show was performed and tested with a total of 815 children (55 Pre-K through 4th grade classes) at 6 schools and 1 library. Multi-method evaluation incorporating both quantitative observation data of children during the performances and qualitative open-ended data tested children's receptivity to specific performance elements. Results from the current study were used as pilot data to inform a funding proposal to fully develop the interactive website, called *Honeybee Market*, and test its effectiveness at improving children's healthy eating behaviors.

Selected Results and Images from the *Gabriel's Kitchen* study



Princess Apricot and Kiwi during a school performance.



Preliminary sketch of web-based content for *Honeybee Market*.

Mean Interest by Character

