

## A Qualitative Phenomenological Exploration of Teachers' Experience With Nutrition Education.

Elisha Hall, Weiwen Chai & Julie A. Albrecht (2016) A Qualitative Phenomenological Exploration of Teachers' Experience With Nutrition Education, *American Journal of Health Education*, 47:3, 136-148, DOI: 10.1080/19325037.2016.1157532

Nutrition and health experts should work individually with teachers to address classroom-specific barriers, provide applicable resources and materials, and create programming that works for each classroom, recommend three researchers in a new paper. In their paper; “*A Qualitative Phenomenological Exploration of Teachers' Experience With Nutrition Education.*”

The results identified five core themes related to roles teachers play in nutrition education, the importance placed upon nutrition, motivation for supplementary activities, barriers, and a relationship between students, teachers, and curriculum. Teachers identified many roles in nutrition education above and beyond educator, including advocate, supporter, guide, and wellness champion. Several teachers were involved in wellness efforts at school-wide or district-wide levels. Teachers connected the importance of nutrition education to their students' futures, health, and formal learning. They perceived the experience of nutrition education through an interaction between themselves, students, and the provided curriculum. This interaction included a combination of unique qualities such as interactive and hands-on educational materials, role modeling, adaptation of standardized material, and positive attitude, which they believed improved learning for students. The teachers expressed a variety of barriers to providing nutrition education, including time, prioritization of core subjects, resources, and the home environment.

However, teachers were highly motivated by feelings of care and responsibility, and found the time to integrate a variety of supplementary nutrition and/or physical activity lessons and/or activities.

### Background:

Nutrition education delivered by classroom teachers has become a popular intervention designed to combat childhood obesity. Previous research has demonstrated that interventions delivered by classroom teachers produce multiple positive outcomes, and in some cases, can be more effective than interventions delivered by nutrition experts. Few studies have explored nutrition education with teachers, however. Better understanding classroom teachers' perspectives of nutrition education is crucial for program delivery, and ultimately, program outcomes.

### Methodology:

The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary teachers describe their experiences with nutrition education. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach in this study, Hall, Chai & Albrecht intended to describe the commonalities and meaning of a lived experience of a



phenomenon for several individuals. In the case of this study, that was the experience of nutrition education. The underpinnings of the transcendental approach rely on communicating participants' perceptions and experiences rather than relying on the researchers' interpretations of the lived experience.

Ten teachers participated in this study. They were selected based on specific criteria, including use of one specific curriculum (Growing Healthy Kids), teaching a specific grade (kindergarten, first, or second), and at least one year of experience delivering nutrition education. Participants were sampled until the point in which no new information emerges from the data. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis with teachers.