

A Case Study

CA-WIC Research Study:

Using Learner-centered Education to Improve Fruit and Vegetable Intake in California WIC Participants

Global Learning Partners has been providing Dialogue Education™ courses for California WIC for many years; specifically, providing expert training and consultation to the California WIC Program in developing their *Finding the Teacher Within* LCE (Learner -centered Education) project for WIC agencies. Under a 3-year special project grant from the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, researchers have completed a three-year evaluation study of the effectiveness of learner-centered nutrition education. The findings from this study, recently published in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (July/August 2010, Volume 42, Number 4, “Using Learner-centered Education to Improve Fruit and Vegetable Intake in California WIC Participants”), demonstrated a positive correlation between the learner-centered approach and desired outcomes; most importantly in this instance, reported changes in participants’ eating behavior. These findings are also consistent with other recently published findings that support the use of participant-centered / learner-centered approaches to facilitate health behavior change. Read the abstract and/or purchase the journal article at ScienceDirect.com:

<http://bit.ly/bRtlhR>

This study is important, empirical confirmation of what Dialogue Education™ practitioners have understood all along: Dialogue Education™ works!

“A rose by any other name...” ☺

It’s important to note

that while named differently, WIC’s *Learner-centered Education* project **IS** Dialogue Education™. And while Global Learning Partners is acknowledged in the published journal article, this connection is demonstrated most clearly throughout the March 2008 WIC final report, *“Implementing and Evaluating A Comprehensive Learner-Centered Education Program to Promote Fruit and Vegetable Intake among WIC Children and Their Families; WIC Special Project Grant FY 2004”*. (Continue reading for some telling excerpts from that report.)

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Excerpts from WIC's ***“Implementing and Evaluating A Comprehensive Learner-Centered Education Program to Promote Fruit and Vegetable Intake among WIC Children and Their Families; WIC Special Project Grant FY 2004”***

Page 14: “These leaders’ responses to the post-intervention survey questions appear to reflect their preparation for their participation in the 2006 FTW (for example, recent changes made in the way they designed their classes as a result of attending the Global Learning Partner [GLP] Courses*).

* *Global Learning Partners (GLP) organization provides training and consultant services for adult learning events. California WIC contracted with GLP to provide two intensive four-day courses (one introductory and one advanced) in learner-centered education for WIC staff.”*

Page 17: “More intervention agencies had incorporated LCE principles and practices in their class design process after participating in FTW (post-intervention):

At baseline, some LCE principles and practices were already being integrated into the class design process. This was noted more often among the intervention agencies (those preparing to participate in the 2005 FTW) than in the control agencies. This finding was not surprising, as intervention agency leaders and class designers were required to attend intensive LCE courses led by Global Learning Partners (GLP) prior to participating in FTW.”

Page 81: *Figure 1. Illustration of ten key principles of Learner-Centered Education (LCE). (Adapted from Global Learning Partners Inc. Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach Workshop)*

- 1. RESPECT**
Learners feel important and valued. Adults need to feel respected for who they are, where they have been, and what they know how to do. Respect is the bedrock of the teacher-learner relationship.
- 2. IMMEDIATE USEFULNESS**
The class provides something the learners feel is helpful in their own lives right now, that they can take back and use right away. The learner is the one who decides if the content is immediately useful.
- 3. SAFETY**
Learners feel comfortable and confident and willing to participate. The setting, topic, teacher, and structure of the class all contribute to safety.
- 4. ENGAGEMENT**
Learners are involved and participate in their learning process. Educators look for smiles, conversation, laughter, questions, and movement that let them know the learners are engaged. People cannot learn if they are not engaged.
- 5. OPEN QUESTIONS**
Use questions without set “correct” answers. Often have the words "what" or "how" and "you." Educators should not feel like they are “fishing” for an answer.
- 6. PAUSE FOR ANSWERS**
Waiting at least five seconds for a group to answer an open question. Learners may feel shy, or may need time to think about the question before they respond.
- 7. AFFIRM**
Praising someone who volunteers an answer. Even if you do not agree with what they say, they will feel respected and you will encourage others to contribute.
- 8. WORK IN PAIRS**
Most people often feel more comfortable talking to just one other person than in front of an entire group.

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This is safer and gets more people involved in the class at the same time.

9. LEARNING STYLE – HEAR, SEE, DO

"Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may not remember; involve me and I will understand."

10. PROVIDES INFORMATION

The class gives participants important new content.

Page 82: Figure 2. Narrative Description of Finding the Teacher Within (FTW) activities

- ◆ Before FTW training events began, participating local agencies were asked to:
 - Designate a two-three person team responsible for adapting and implementing the agency's own FTW program;
 - Enroll all team members in two GLP LCE courses*; and
 - Conduct an orientation meeting for all agency staff who would support, influence, or actively participate in the program.
- ◆ All agency leaders attended **four** Train-the-Trainer sessions in Sacramento over the course of the program.
- ◆ WIC class teachers were trained during two on-site FTW Workshops:
 - In preparation for the workshops, agencies were asked to:
 - Conduct a learning needs and resource assessment of their own agency staff,
 - Create or revise at least two lesson plans incorporating LCE principles and practices; and
 - Use input from teaching staff, participant field tests, and GLP mentors to finalize plans.
 - During these workshops, teachers were trained to *lead* the new LCE classes, while agency leaders observed and provided them with feedback.
- ◆ Agencies also:
 - Conducted a series of follow up staff in-services, and
 - Participated in the evaluation of the program.

One-to-one partnerships were established between agencies and the state: Each agency was assigned their own state partner(s) to help support and mentor agencies throughout the FTW process. Agency leaders and state partners spent a great deal of time communicating during the year to develop classes and to troubleshoot problems.

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