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Assignment 3: Proposal for Children's or Adult's Program

I attended the Columbus Metropolitan Main Library's Ready for Kindergarten Class at on Wednesday, November first. This program is offered weekly at this location. The class was 30 minutes long, and is an event for parents and families with children ages between three and six. The class is a place for families to "play school," by learning and practicing kindergarten readiness skills like name writing, letter sounds, cutting with scissors, and lining up. Parents also receive homework and tips on practicing kindergarten skills at home.

When I attended the program, it was a rainy Wednesday evening and I was warned that attendance may be low, and that this program has considerably low attendance in general. Only one mother and daughter arrived, so the program was altered slightly. The program was staffed by one Librarian, who specializes in children and teen librarianship. The program content consisted of the child identifying the letter "p" in multiple library books, coloring the letter "p" on a coloring sheet with crayons, working on finger skills by cutting the "ps" from the coloring page, and lining up practice, which included the child following the Librarian throughout the library.

The Librarian was extremely qualified, and seemed unbothered by the low attendance. She altered her program to fit the needs of the child, which in this case was simplifying the instruction due to a language barrier existing between her and the family. The family spoke only Spanish, but understood a bit of English, so the Librarian kept her instructions elementary and offered a consistent line of positive feedback to the child to encourage participation. The Librarian was animated, playful, warm, and enthusiastic. She appeared highly comfortable working with the child, and her flexible and engaged demeanor was the most successful aspect of the program. The least successful part of the program was the language barrier. Although it is hard to insist the presenter be fluent in multiple languages, having a fundamental knowledge of a language spoken in the community would have been extremely beneficial.

My proposed program for the Columbus Metropolitan Main Library is "Cook and Eat Seasonally," and focuses on educating attendees about local and seasonal food, what the nutritional values are of these foods and how they align with our daily nutritional needs, and how to prepare, cook, store, and pair these foods to create a balanced, seasonal meal. The program will begin as a trial and will run monthly, from May through October, to foster and encourage interest in urban gardening and use of local farmer's markets. The program will partner with local food educators and farmer's markets to provide adequate education and resources. If it is successful during this time frame, a discussion within the Library will follow to decide whether to extend the program year round. Success will be measured by participant attendance and feedback through survey responses. Each meeting will last an hour and a half and occur on the first Friday evening of each month. The program is geared toward adults and is intended for those ages 18 and older.

The program will fit into the Columbus Metropolitan Library's Main Branch service area of Adult Learning and GED programming. It is ultimately designed to support adults with or without children, which is why I am not grouping it within the category of Parenting and Families. Cook and Eat Seasonally aligns with the Library's strategic plan, which states one outcome of service as "securing community trust and the ability to provide timeless value to the community through continual growth and improvement," (Columbus Metropolitan Library, "Purpose, Vision, Strategy," 2017). By offering continued education about food and nutrition, the Library is supporting the health and wellness of the community through offering the tools and education needed for personal empowerment. Cook and Eat Seasonally also aligns with the Library's purpose of sharing resources and connecting people (Columbus Metropolitan Library, "Purpose, Vision, Strategy," 2017) by using the library as a space to connect food educators, local farmers, Librarians, and members of the community.

Program content would center around food and nutrition education, including grocery shopping and meal planning, preparing foods and food safety, cooking and preserving foods, and balanced nutrition focusing on whole foods. Each month, the session will begin with an overview of what foods are currently in season and meal recommendations based on those foods. Then it will include the components mentioned above. Participants would receive a handout including four dinner ideas for that month based on what is in season. Dinner ideas would be selected by Librarians under the guidance and supervision of food educators from the community partner Local Matters (Local Matters, 2017).

The grocery shopping and meal planning would be a brief overview about topics food label education, including topics like buying organic vs. non organic, GMOs, tips for buying in season, and how to save money doing so. At each meeting, participants will be given a copy of the Environmental Working Group's (2017) "Dirty Dozen" and "Clean Fifteen," which are freely accessible online resources that empower shoppers at the grocery store to pick the healthiest produce based on 2017 results of pesticide toxicity levels.

The food preparation segment of the program would include cutting and preparing demonstrations, which will be performed by the Librarian or associated staff member. A table will be set up at the front of the meeting room so that the demonstrator can exhibit proper cutting and chopping techniques. Topics include knife safety, chopping and dicing strategies for quick cook time, and easy marinades for meat.

The cooking segment will discuss different cooking techniques, including best oils to use depending on heat setting, how to easily roast and sauté vegetables, and an overview of food safety in regards to raw meat and appropriate cooking temperatures. Produce used in demonstrations will be donated by local farmers.

The storing and preserving segment will focus on how to get the most out of your food. Because the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 survey suggests that many adults in this area live alone or without children, this segment is especially relevant. More often than not meals are cooked in large batches, so storing and saving meals makes cooking cost effective for these demographics. Topics will include how to freeze meat, how to freeze entire meals like soups and stews, and discussion of what investments can be made to ensure food freshness, like glass Tupperware and vacuum sealers.

The final component will include how to pair foods to ensure having a meal with balanced nutrition by using the USDA MyPlate recommendations as a guideline. A printout of an example plate, including the appropriate portions for fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins will be available for participants to take at each program.

Additional program content includes monthly book recommendations to learn more about the foods in season, how to start your own urban garden, how to save money while cooking at home, and other related topics. There will also be a rotating display in the adult services area that includes copies of these recommended readings.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Columbus Metropolitan Main Library serves a population of 3% under the age of five, 2.6% between the ages of five and 14, 3% between the ages of 15 and 19, 38.2% between the ages of 20 and 29, 34.7% between the ages of 30 and 54, and 18.2% 55 and older. This means that the median age is 31, and the majority of the population (93.8%) is 20 years old or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

From the 7,731 total households in this area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), the majority are nonfamilies (83.8%). One person households are the majority (65.3%), followed by two person households (27.6%), and three person households (4.7%), per the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau. The average household size is 1.46 and average family size is 2.41 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

These demographics are ideal for a cooking program. Because the majority of the population are adults, there is a necessity to cook homemade food for overall health and wellbeing, and oftentimes those living alone or without children turn to eating meals out and spending a significant portion of their income because they do not see a need to cook for themselves alone. The slight majority of the community (32%) makes less \$25,000 annually (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). About 7% have an income between \$25,000 and \$30,000, 10% between \$35,000 and \$50,000, 16% between \$50,000 and \$75,000, 11% between \$75,000 and \$100,000, about 12% between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and about 14% make \$150,000 or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The median income is \$53,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and this type of income does not encourage constant eating out which tends to be quite pricy. Aside from cooking to save money, the majority of "fast-food," or "fast-casual" eating does not supply

individuals with adequate nutrition. Therefore, based on householder composition and yearly income, I feel the Cook and Eat Seasonally program would highly benefit the community being served by the Columbus Main Library.

For this program to be successful, there are specific staff, supplies, materials, and equipment needed. Regarding staff, one Librarian is needed to coordinate with the community partner Local Matters about nutritional information. Local Matter's staff may also be utilized to demonstrate cooking techniques. In addition, a supplemental staff or customer services representative is needed to help facilitate the program under the Librarian's direction. Supplies needed include kitchen knives, forks, and cutting boards, as well as various fruits and vegetables to demonstrate on. Additional supplies include monthly handouts profiling seasonal foods, a monthly meal plan guide, copies of the Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen Shopping Guides, MyPlate examples, and library books for the recommended reading display and available at the program for immediate checkout. Equipment includes a fridge to store food from demonstrations, a table that can be brought into the meeting room for cooking and preparation demonstrations, and library laptops for the participant satisfaction surveys at the end of each program. Associated costs include thank you donations to local farmers for supplying produce and potential costs associated with community partner Local Matters for the use of their staff and expertise.

Because the program begins in May, the winter months will be spent preparing the content, developing relationships and contacts with local farmers, contacting Local Matters, reserving meeting rooms, securing equipment, supplies, and donations, and assigning staff to duties. The timeline will begin in January. The first two weeks of January include booking meeting rooms for the first Friday of each month, for the same time, from May through October. Additionally, a Librarian will be selected to lead the program and will begin outreach to recruit an associated staff member to assist with programming. By the end of the month, both staff will meet to develop program content and handouts together. During the first two weeks of February, the Librarian will reach out to Local Matters with the proposed program content to secure the partnership. The Librarian will also begin to reach out to local farmer's markets to see if any farmers are interested in donating produce in the spring. The second two weeks of February will include the Librarian and associated staff continuing to develop program content. The first two weeks of March will include gathering and securing supplies needed aside from the produce, like cooking equipment and a fold up table. The final two weeks of March will include meetings between the Librarian and associated staff member to finalize meal plans, program content, and handouts. They will also meet with Local Matters to review meal plan guides. The first two weeks of April will include finalizing partnership agreements with local farmers and continuing to finalize meal plans with Local Matters.

Cook and Eat Seasonally will be evaluated by participant program attendance and feedback. Attendance will be recorded through a mandatory sign-in sheet at each program including participants first and last name. Feedback will be recorded monthly during each program through the use of a Google Survey during the last five to seven minutes of the session. A dozen or so laptops will be provided through the Main Library's laptop rental service, and the survey will be optimized for a mobile platform as well so participants can respond via their smartphones or tablets. The survey will include a few background questions pertaining to participant and household demographics, and multiple questions assessing their satisfaction with the program. An additional spot for fill in the blank suggestions to improve programming will also be included in the survey. Google analytics will be utilized to understand survey responses and create visualizations to be shown to the director.

References:

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