

A Comparison of Program Delivery Methods: Webinar and Face-to-Face

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Introduction

Extension educators are using new distance delivery methods. At the same time, they are wondering if these new methods are as effective as face-to-face. *Making Mealtime Happen* is a training developed by the author for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) staff in the University of Minnesota Extension. It provided an opportunity to compare teaching and program evaluation results for two delivery methods, webinar and face-to-face.

Program

Making Mealtime Happen was designed for participants to increase their knowledge about family mealtime to enhance their work with SNAP-Ed clientele.

Learning objectives

SNAP-ED staff will increase their knowledge of:

- ❖ importance and functions of family mealtime.
- ❖ research on family mealtime.
- ❖ parenting practices relevant to mealtime.
- ❖ cultural considerations.
- ❖ tools and resources.

The 1 ¼ hour program was offered 6 times with 65 participants in:

- ❖ 3 face-to-face sessions for projects at Worthington, Mankato, and Morris; n = 32
- ❖ 3 webinars; n = 33
 - projects at Grand Rapids and Thief River Falls
 - one open to all SNAP-Ed staff

Adjustments were made to allow for delivery via webinar but content remained the same.

Method

A Survey Monkey was developed to measure teaching effectiveness and the extent to which participants gained knowledge about family mealtime. The survey included questions on:

- ❖ demographics,
- ❖ knowledge gained,
- ❖ teaching effectiveness,
- ❖ and the need for future resources in family mealtime.

For all participants, a link to the Survey Monkey was provided in the presentation and handouts. Reminders were sent to Program Coordinators and Extension Educators two to three weeks following the presentation inviting them to:

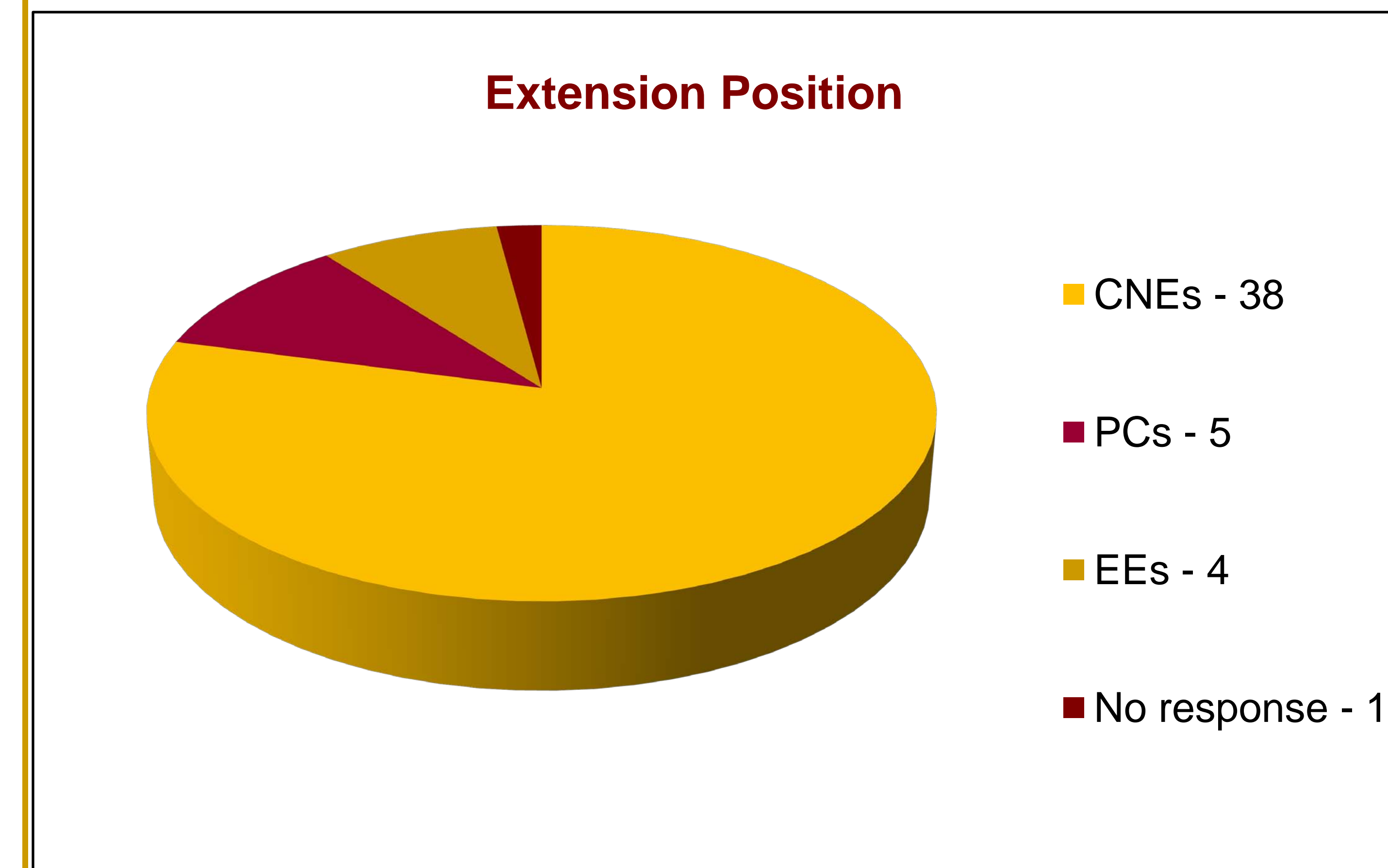
1. complete the evaluation themselves .
2. forward the reminder to Community Nutrition Educators (CNEs).

For participants in the open webinar, the author forwarded the link directly to participants.

Results were displayed in Survey Monkey. However, in order to separate out responses from each of the two delivery methods, individual results were viewed and hand tabulated.

Participants

Forty eight participants started the Survey Monkey evaluation with 46 completing it for a 70.8% return rate. Of the 48; 79.2% were Community Nutrition Educators (CNEs), 10.4% were Program Coordinators, 8.3% were Educators, and 2.1% did not respond.



Teaching Evaluation Webinar & Face-to-Face Comparison

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Mean Webinar N = 22	Mean Face-to-Face N = 24	Difference in Means
This training met my expectations.	3.14	3.00	.14
The level of materials presented was appropriate.	3.32	3.20	.12
The presenter was effective.	3.14	3.30	.16

Program Evaluation Webinar & Face-to-Face Comparison

To what extent did you gain knowledge about the following?	Mean Webinar N = 22	Mean Face-to-Face N = 24	Difference in Means
Importance & functions of family mealtime.	2.82	2.83	.01
Research on family mealtime.	3.00	2.92	.08
Parenting related to mealtime including parenting styles.	2.90	2.70	.20
Factors to consider for teaching family mealtime with different cultural groups.	2.73	2.71	.02
Family mealtime tools & resources.	2.95	2.83	.12

“Webinars provide a valuable tool that can be effectively and efficiently used to reach Extension stakeholders and facilitate the collection of program evaluation data. Speakers and participants gain by having broad geographic interaction, without the costs associated with travel.” (Allred & Larson, 2010)

Discussion

Making Mealtime Happen provided an ideal opportunity to compare the effectiveness in two delivery methods; webinar and face-to-face. There were nearly equal numbers of training participants and those completing the Survey Monkey evaluation allowing for comparison; however, results were not statistically analyzed.

In teaching evaluation: (difference between means indicated in parentheses)

- ❖ Means in webinar delivery were slightly higher in meeting participant expectations (.14) and appropriateness of materials (.12).
- ❖ The mean for face-to-face delivery was slightly higher in presenter effectiveness (.16).

In program evaluation: (difference between means indicated in parentheses)

- ❖ The means were nearly identical for importance and functions of mealtime (.01) and cultural considerations (.02).
- ❖ The means in webinar delivery were slightly higher for research (.08) and tools/resources (.12).
- ❖ The greatest differences in means (.20) occurred in parenting relating to mealtime with webinar delivery higher compared to face-to-face delivery.

What might be possible reasons for webinar delivery rating slightly higher in 6 out of 8 measures given the similarities in: 1) number of participants, 2) number completing evaluations, and 3) positions within Extension? Differences may have occurred as a result of:

- ❖ Whether or not the training was “voluntary.” Extension educators and/or program coordinators requested staff to take part for five of the six sessions; 3 face-to-face and 2 webinars. The sixth session was a webinar open to all SNAP-Ed staff who had not previously taken part; i.e. the decision to participate was a “voluntary” for 11 of the 22 webinar participants completing the evaluation. The high proportion of “voluntary” webinar participants could have influenced overall results.
- ❖ Background of participants. Regarding the higher mean for parenting knowledge in webinar delivery (2.90) compared to face-to-face (2.70), one possible explanation might be whether or not participants had a parent education background. There was no way to determine background as that was not asked in the survey.

Limitations:

- ❖ training of internal Extension,
- ❖ small numbers,
- ❖ and the lack of statistical analysis.

Implications

This investigatory study comparing webinar and face-to-face delivery of training of SNAP-Ed Extension staff is a beginning step in determining the effectiveness of distance delivery of educational programs. More comparison studies, particularly those involving external audiences, are needed. Although face-to-face delivery has traditionally been the preferred delivery method of Extension educators, they might consider these results as an indication that overall, delivery of educational programs via webinar can be as effective or even more effective as face-to-face delivery.

References:

Allred, S. B., & Smallidge, P. J. (2010). An educational evaluation of web-based forestry education. *Journal of Extension* [Online], 48(6), Article 6FEA2. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2010december/a2.php>

Larson, D. K., & Sung, C-H. (2009). Comparing student performance: Online versus blended versus face-to-face. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 13(1), 31-42.