Building Health Literacy Among an Urban Teenage Population by Creating Online Health Videos for Public and School Health Curriculum Use

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BACKGROUND

HealthFlicks is a project to build health literacy among teenage urban audiences that receive the majority of their entertainment through online video repositories such as YouTube™ or Google videos. HealthFlicks will use mentored students to develop and produce web video vignettes on teen health topics, featuring scenarios and scripts created by teens with librarian and educator oversight, with a cohort of authentic and self-motivated teen writers, actors, and production crew and urban new Haven locations. Partners include the Cushing Whitney Medical Library as grant coordinator, resource for accurate health information, and after school activity location; Hill Regional Career High School as a source of student participants, actors and filming locations; and both the Office of New Haven and State Affairs at Yale and the New Haven Free Public Library for providing access to filming locations and advice.

January 2010. Collaboration between the Cushing/Whitney Medical Library and Hill Regional Career High School began, consisting of recruiting interested student participants, explaining the project to counselors, librarians, and teachers, regular meetings to share ideas, and documenting student participation with participation and media release form.

March–July 2010. Equipment and software were acquired. Scripting, filming, and editing of the first Healthflicks began in March. A Yale Student Video Coordinator position was created and filled. A Healthflicks YouTube™ channel, email account, and google groups were established.

August 2010. A “Healthflicks Academy” was created, a health information literacy workshop to engage students and maintain their interest during a normally-unfocused summer period. Six students participated in the Academy.

September 2010. A Healthflicks blog, Vodpod™ service (to build one’s own video channel), and a Facebook fan page were set up.

November 2010–January 2011. A new Student Video Coordinator continues to meet with students and updates blog. Two dedicated teachers remain involved in the project. Students scripted and taped several video scenes for their school’s entry for the HOSA 2011 national meeting.

February–April 2011. With grant funding set to conclude April 30th, a second Yale student coordinator was hired to mentor students, develop, and complete remaining project themes. Ten Healthflicks in a variety of styles were deposited in YouTube™. Plans are underway to notify school health educators in New Haven about Healthflicks. Many avenues for follow-up research.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Outputs include a YouTube™ channel hosting a series of health topic videos immediately released upon creation to a wide audience, as well as a blog and social network pages for publicity. A Healthflicks Academy was presented in the Medical Library for a week during the summer of 2010, teaching students health information literacy to identify credible health web sites. The Healthflicks project also was introduced into the curriculum of one health careers elective class, as well as the Health Occupations Students Association (HOSA) after-school student club, which entered a Healthflick into a video competition at their national meeting in spring 2011. The HOSA national meeting will occur after the end of the subcontract, becoming a tangible way to introduce Healthflicks into many U.S. communities following the formal project conclusion.

OBJECTIVE

The Healthflicks project gives high school students with interest in health careers an opportunity to develop and produce short videos on teen health problems and online health information. The goal of Healthflicks is to increase health information literacy among teenage populations, both for the participants and viewers. Students will also improve their health information literacy skills for future health careers.

METHOD

The project was launched in early 2010, supported by an NNLM subcontract grant. Yale University’s Cushing/Whitney Medical Library is a short walk from Hill Regional Career High School, a New Haven magnet school which features a health careers curriculum track. Recruitment of students took place at the school, with the assistance of school staff and the librarian. Grant funds also supported the acquisition of video production and editing equipment, salary support, and publicity. College student video coordinators were hired as the primary trainer and mentor, providing continuity and caring for students.