

Food, fun and conversation  
about things that matter

Welcome!



TODAY'S GOAL:

**Learn about  
The Family Dinner  
Project (TFDP) and  
how to bring TFDP's  
programs to your  
community**



# AGENDA

- **Welcome**
- Why family dinner matters
- Overview of The Family Dinner Project
- Community Programs for your agencies: Community Dinners, Caregiver Workshops, Dinner in a Box
- Bringing TFDP to your Communities



**PART 1:**  
**The WHY and HOW**  
**of Family Dinners**



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOU ON TFDP WEBSITE



- ✓ Your Guide to Hosting a Virtual Community Dinner
- ✓ Sample TFDP materials
- ✓ Facilitator's Guide
- ✓ Champion Handbook



**Let's take a  
moment to reflect...**

# WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT FAMILY DINNERS?



Good for the body



Good for the brain



Good for the spirit  
(or mental health)



# COGNITIVE BENEFITS



Conversation around the table boosts vocabulary



Higher grades in school



Higher achievement test scores



More powerful than homework, art classes or sports



(Snow & Beals, 2006; Snow, 1983; Hofferth & Sanberg, 2001; CASA, 2007; Fiese, 2000)

# DOES A BODY GOOD

- ✓ Consume **more** fruits, vegetables, protein, fiber, and vitamins
- ✓ Consume **fewer** fried foods, fatty foods, and soft drinks
- ✓ **Greater** likelihood of eating breakfast
- ✓ **Better** cardiovascular health in young teens
- ✓ Health benefits **extend** to young adults
- ✓ **Lower** rates of obesity and eating disorders
- ✓ **Reduction** of asthma symptoms
- ✓ **Fewer** calories



(Shiman, Frazier, Rockett, et al, 2000; Gilman, 2000; Khoury, 2015; Larson, 2007; Berge, 2015; Markson & Fiese, 2000; Wolfson, 2015; Harbec & Pagani, 2018)

# GREAT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

## Lower rates of:

1. Violence and substance abuse
2. School problems
3. Eating disorders in teens
4. Anxiety, depression and stress

## Higher rates of:

1. Resilience
2. Self esteem
3. Kids feel more connected to parents

(Fulkerson, 2006; Eisenberg, 2004; Sen, 2010; Neumark-Sztainer, 2008; Utter, 2013; Elgar, 2014, Harbec & Pagani, 2018)

# BENEFITS TO ADULTS, TOO!

The shopping, cooking, cleaning is a lot of work but...



Greater self-esteem



Better mental health for parents



Less dieting behavior



Lower levels of depression and stress



Healthier eating across the life span



Higher intake of fruits and vegetables

(Berge, Miller et al, 2018; Berge, MacLehose, et al 2012; Blake, et al, 2011; Fulkerson et al, 2014; Utter, Larson et al, 2018)

# WHAT MAKES FAMILY DINNER SO PROTECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE?



Quality of mealtime is key

Talking makes us eat mindfully

One of the few times of day to connect

The power of ritual

Provides a place to tell stories

# CONNECTION



Kids who feel connected to their parents feel better

Catch problems when they are small

Parents know what's going on

Everyone gets a chance to speak and listen

Connection provides a powerful seat belt

# IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL

Makes boundary around family


Time away from daily hubbub

Allows stability

Scripted and unscripted

Connects us to previous generations

Offers meaning

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(Fiese, 2006; Fishel, 2015)

# BENEFITS OF STORY-TELLING



The way we make sense of the world

Kids who know family stories are more resilient and have higher self esteem

Certain types of stories (lemonade from lemons) are extra potent

Helps kids feel connected to something bigger than themselves

(Duke, Lazarus, Fivush, 2008; Fivush, Bohanek, & Duke, 2009; McAdams et al, 2001)

# THE BENEFITS OF STORY-TELLING: STORIES YOU CAN TELL

Holidays or  
celebrations

When you were  
the same age as  
your child

About an animal

Work or school

Overcoming a  
challenge

A love story

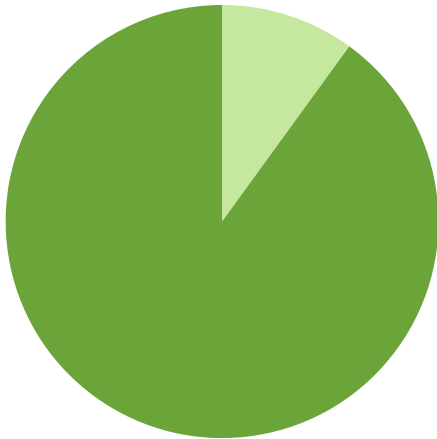
Your name or your  
child's name

A story about a  
new city or  
country

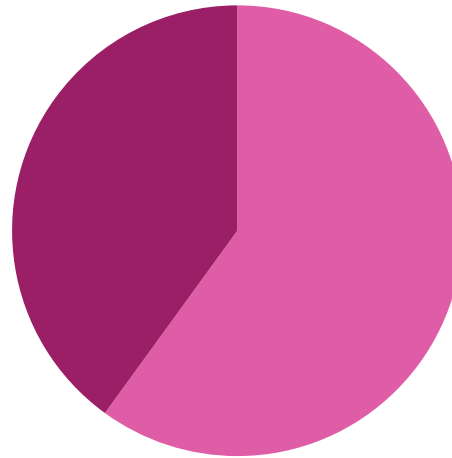
A funny story

# FAMILIES WANT TO HAVE DINNER

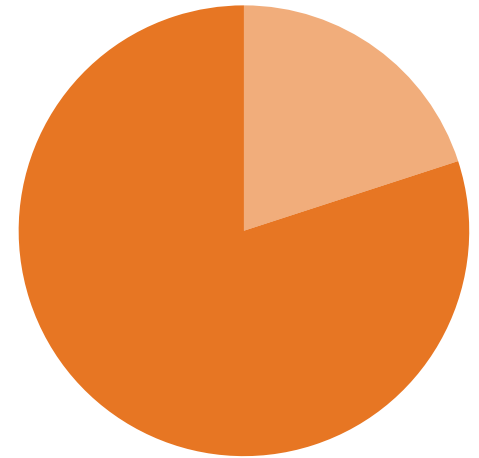
90% of Americans  
want to  
increase the frequency of  
their family meals




30-40% of families  
have dinner together  
On any given night



80% of teens  
would rather  
have dinner with  
their parents





The research is the *why*  
The Family Dinner Project is the *how*


## OUR MISSION



***The Family Dinner Project*** is growing a movement that champions family dinner as an opportunity for family members to connect with each other through food, fun and conversation about things that matter.

A photograph of a family enjoying a meal outdoors. A man is holding a laughing child, and a woman is smiling in the background. A circular text overlay is present on the left side of the image.

**Why food, fun  
and  
conversation?**



**What do we  
mean by  
“dinner”?**

# WHAT IS AND ISN'T A FAMILY DINNER?

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Any Two people, not everyone needed

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Can include short cuts, take-out, NOT scratch food, organic, nor gourmet

---

Best not to have TV on but some gadgets are OK some of the time

---

Talking better than silence

---

Don't be constrained by "5 times a week" research findings

---

It doesn't have to be perfect!



**How do  
we define  
“family”?**

A photograph of a family in a modern kitchen. A woman in the foreground is chopping lettuce on a wooden cutting board. Behind her, a man is cooking at the stove. To the right, a young girl in a yellow dress and a boy are looking at the camera. The boy is holding two cherry tomatoes over his eyes. On the counter, there is a large pile of fresh vegetables including lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and bell peppers. A green circular graphic with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

What's most  
important to  
remember?

## OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

...that families come in all shapes and sizes

...that dinners don't need to be *perfect* to be effective (and they don't need to be dinner!)

...that dinners are better when all family members participate

...that healthy food matters (...but we're not the food police)

...that we're realistic about technology

...that **fun** and **conversation** are every bit as important as **food**



# What do we do?



# Resources for partners and families

# FOUR WEEKS TO BETTER FAMILY DINNERS

WEEK 1

*MAKE THE  
COMMITMENT*

WEEK 2

*MAKE IT  
SIMPLE*

WEEK 3

*MAKE IT  
FUN*

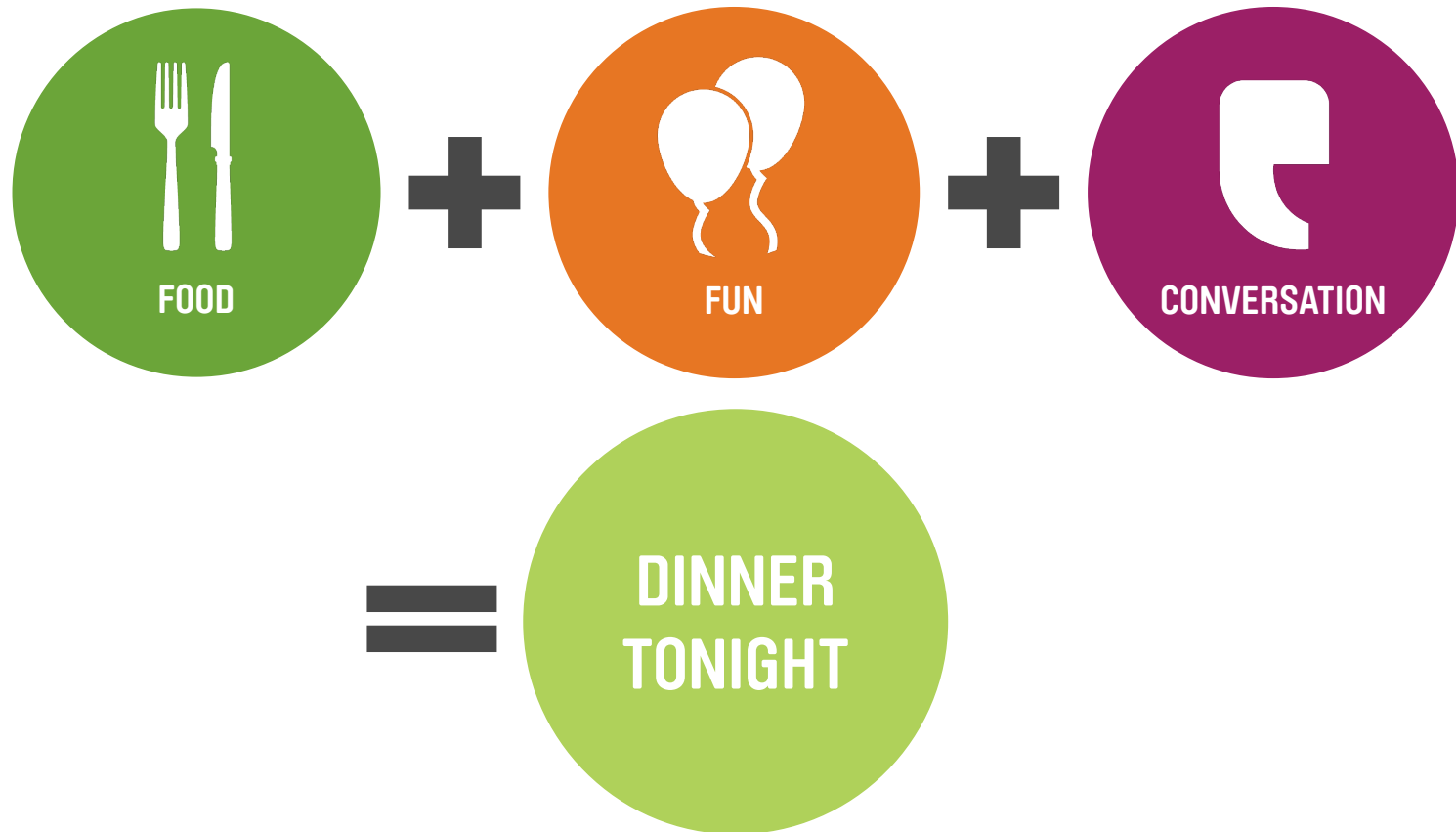
WEEK 4

*MAKE IT  
MATTER*

BETTER  
FAMILY  
DINNERS!

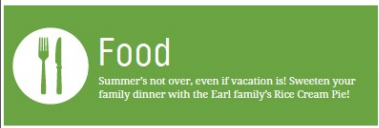


# FIGURE OUT WHAT'S FOR DINNER TONIGHT



**GET TIPS AND TRICKS IN OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

## STARTING A FAMILY DINNER ROUTINE FOR BACK TO SCHOOL



Summer's not over, even if vacation is! Sweeten your family dinner with the Earl family's Rice Cream Pie!



Get back in "school mode" with some literature-themed family dinner ideas from Dr. Anne Fishell!



**Celebrate Esther Day – or any day – with conversation starters about the power of love!**



## CELEBRATING THE SEASON WITH FAMILY DINNER

A photograph of a woman and a young girl with curly hair, both smiling and looking down at a small red gift box. The woman is on the left, wearing a white shirt, and the girl is on the right, wearing a grey sweater. They are indoors, with a window and some greenery visible in the background.

**This month, brainstorm ways to give to others by asking "What's one thing that could make \_\_\_\_\_ happier today?"**



## INDEPENDENCE AT THE DINNER TABLE



Enjoy summer's bounty with Brenda Thompson's fast and fresh Bruschetta Chicken Skillet!



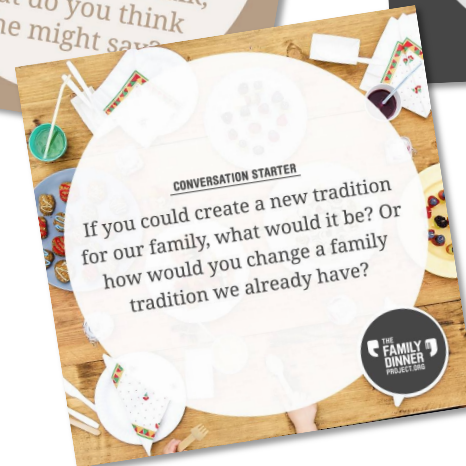
It's the perfect season for some outdoor family time. Relax during (or after) dinner with a game of "Use Your Senses."



**Tackle the topic of independence and dive into American history with these Recipes for Conversation!**



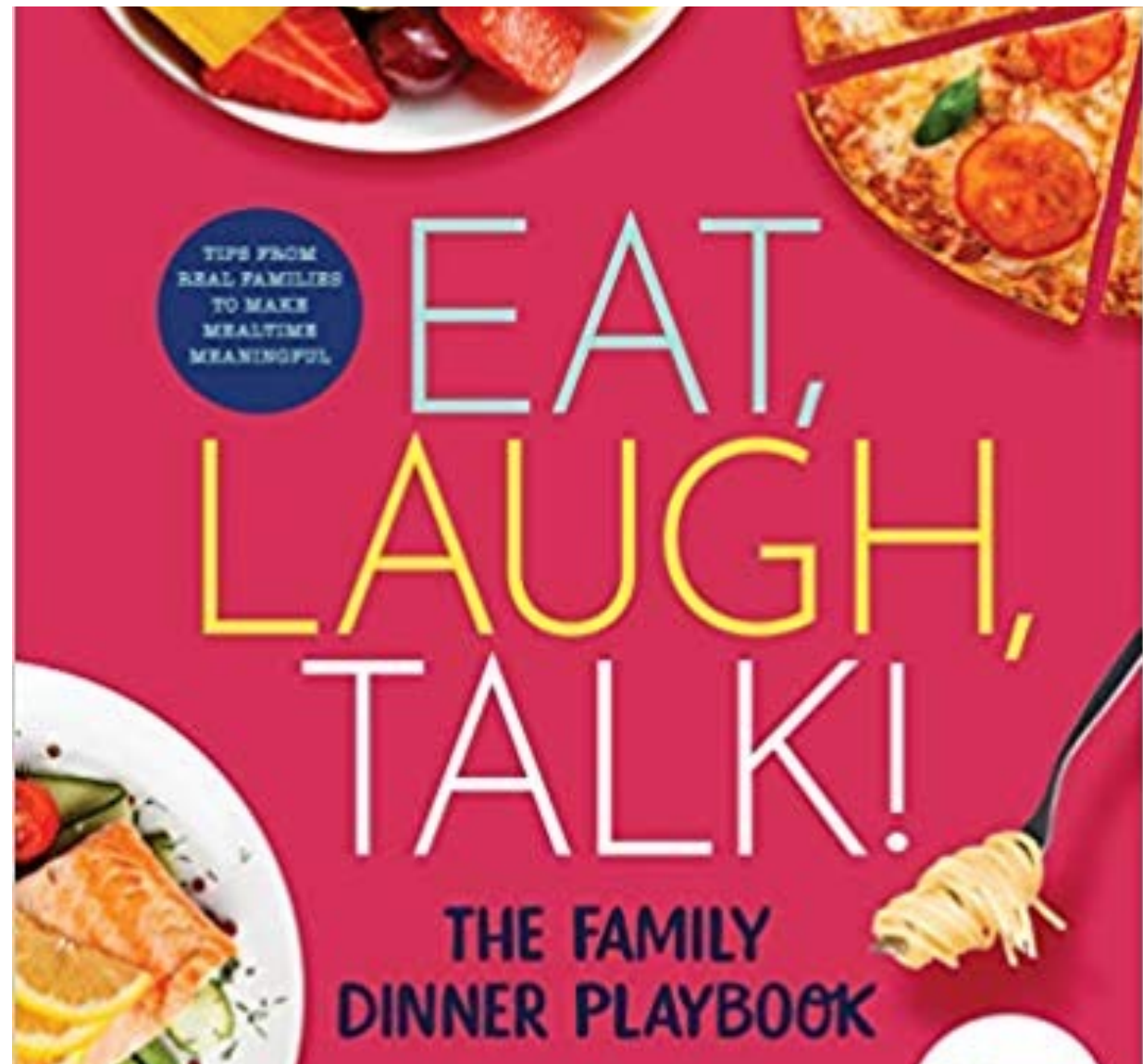
# CONVERSATION STARTERS



# WELCOMING TABLE RESOURCES

- Games to help with sensory, behavioral and feeding challenges
- Blog posts that address special challenges raised by ASD, ADHD, trauma
- All translated into Spanish
- Holiday resources for families with special needs
- Brief versions of resources that are easy to share on social media or by email

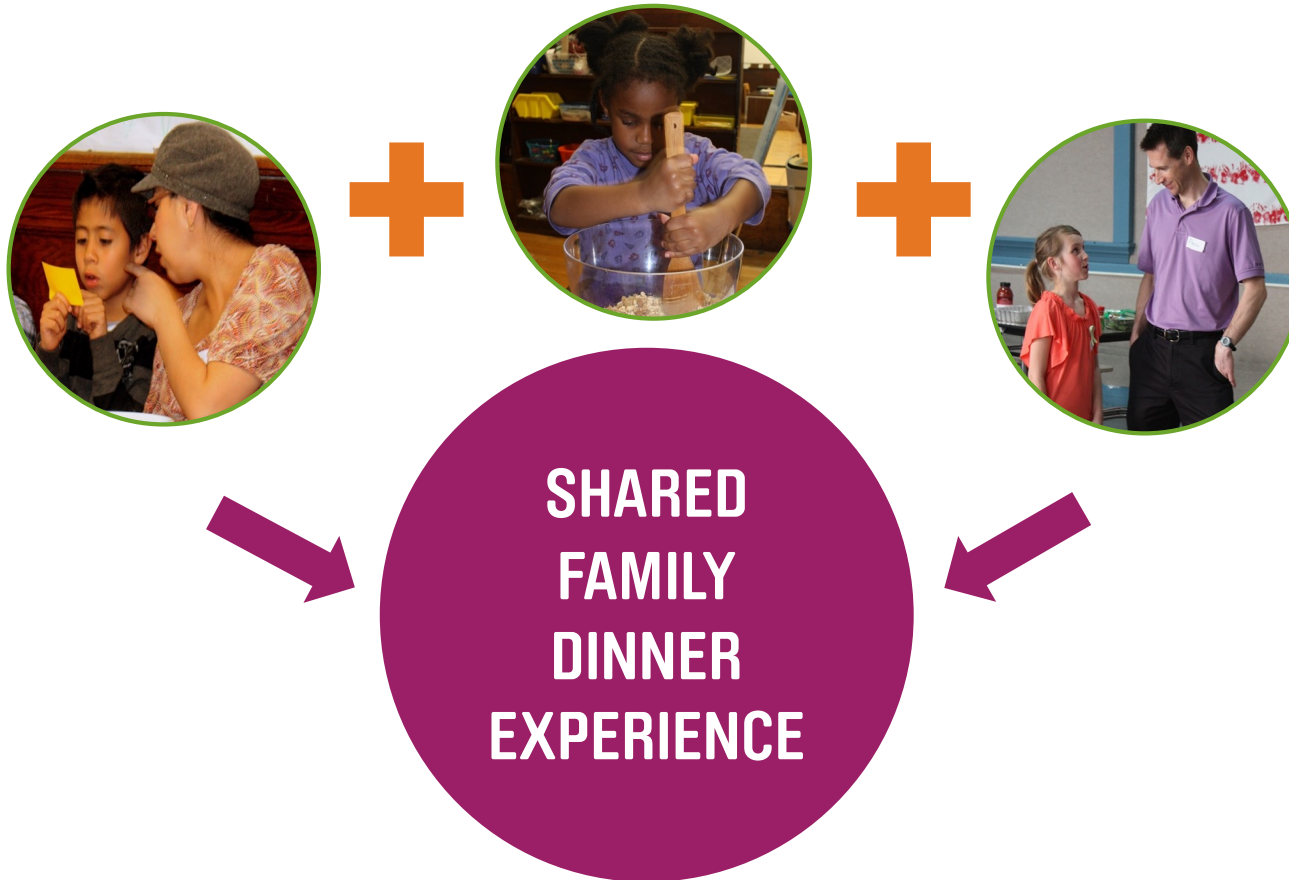
CHECK OUT OUR  
FAMILY DINNER  
PLAYBOOK





# Community-based events

# COMMUNITY DINNERS: VIRTUAL + IN PERSON



# COMMUNITY DINNERS



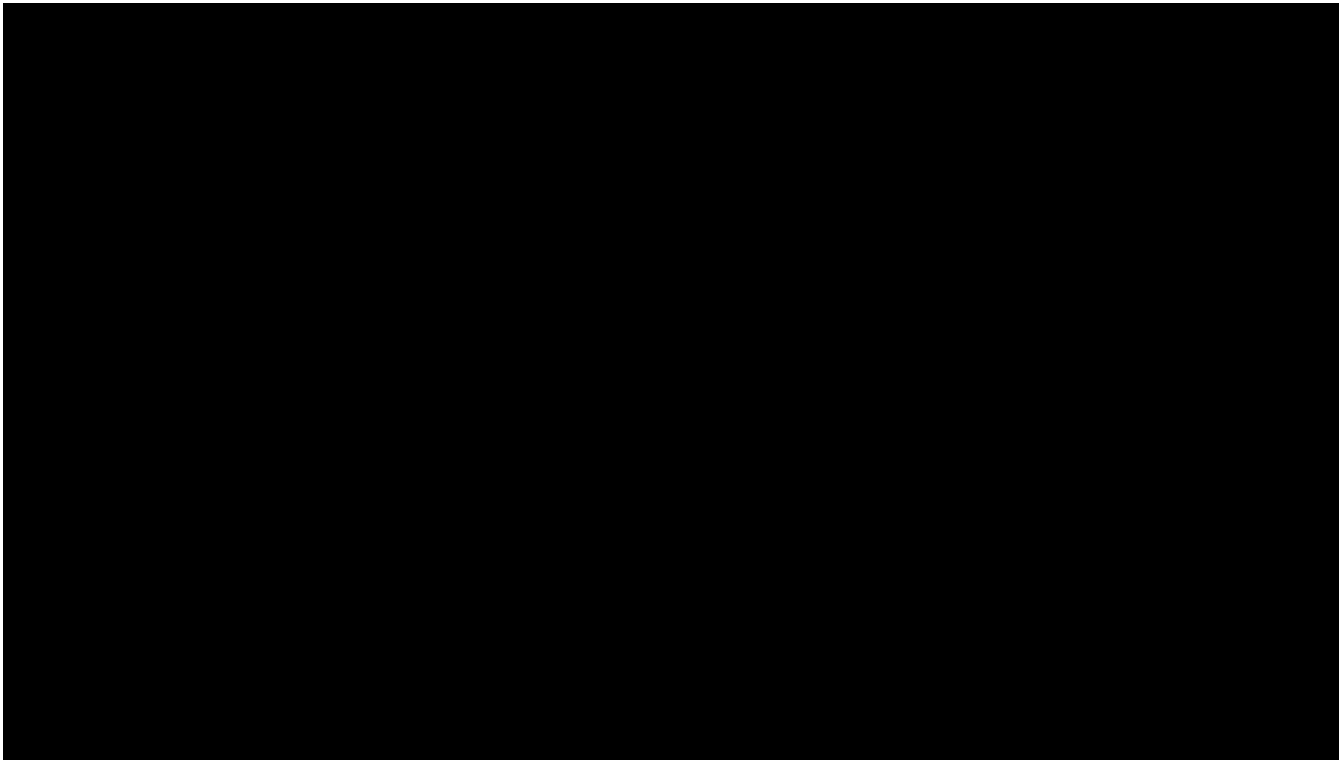




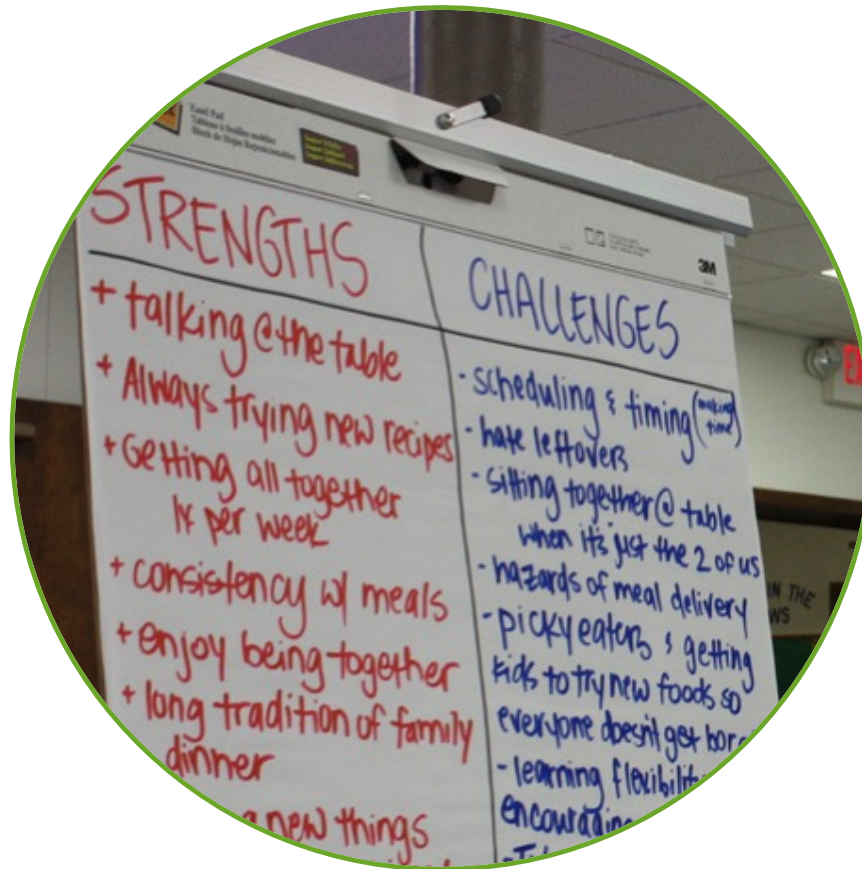




## COMMUNITY DINNER-HANSCOM AIR BASE- VIDEO



# PARENT/CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS: STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS



# Dinner in a Box

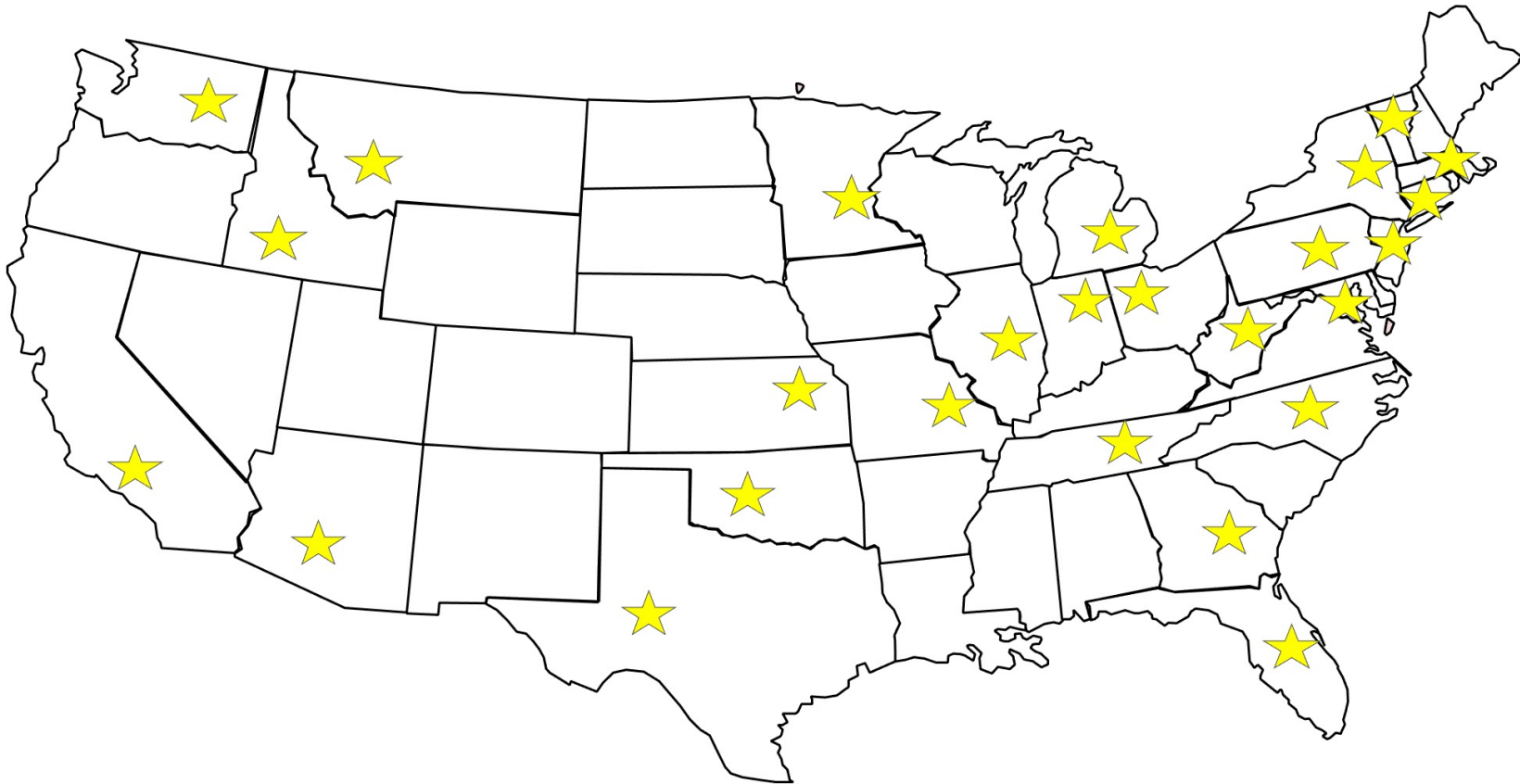


- Partner with emergency food delivery services, or food pantries, e.g. Montana No Kid Hungry and Idaho Office of Drug Policy
- TFDP resources that encourage bonding and enjoyment to accompany food boxes.
- Create a guide for your community with Budget Friendly Dinner Tonight recipes, games, conversation starters
- Printable Recipes, Games, Tips, and Recipe for Conversations



# How do we work?

# TFDP IMPACT: OUR NATIONAL PRESENCE



★ = past/current/emerging partner

# PARTNERS ARE CORE TO OUR WORK

## EVENTS & WORKSHOPS



## AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS & CONTENT CREATION



*\*Representative sample – not all partners shown*

# PARTNERS SHARE OUR RESOURCES THROUGH EVENTS



Hosted several Community Dinner events with teens and parents at Sanctuary for Families, New York's leading service provider and advocate for survivors of domestic violence.



Partner with several YMCA's in NJ to support them in hosting "Community Dinners" with local families. A number of YMCAs have integrated Community Dinners into their regular programming.



Over the last 10 years, offered caregiver Workshops about the benefits of shared mealtime and helping kids to share more at the dinner table.



Introduced thousands of teens and teachers to TFDP programs and resources through online collaboration and presentations at national and regional conferences.



Partnered with Blue Star Families (military families) to co-host Community Dinner at various military bases across the country.



Presented family dinner research and resources to coalition of service providers, educators and faith organizations serving youth in Franklin County, MA.

**Note:** representative sample of events

# PARTNERS HELP SPREAD THE WORD



## Co-branding Informational Campaigns

- Reached large number of families with high-profile partner, Cheerios
- Collaborated on a national ad campaign to get TFDP messages and resources to broader audience



## Creating Content for Tech Savvy Families

- Partnered on several campaigns, including #DeviceFreeDinner in 2017 to support families in learning how to manage technology at the table
- Co-developed a Community Dinner event specifically to support parents as they help their children navigate digital media

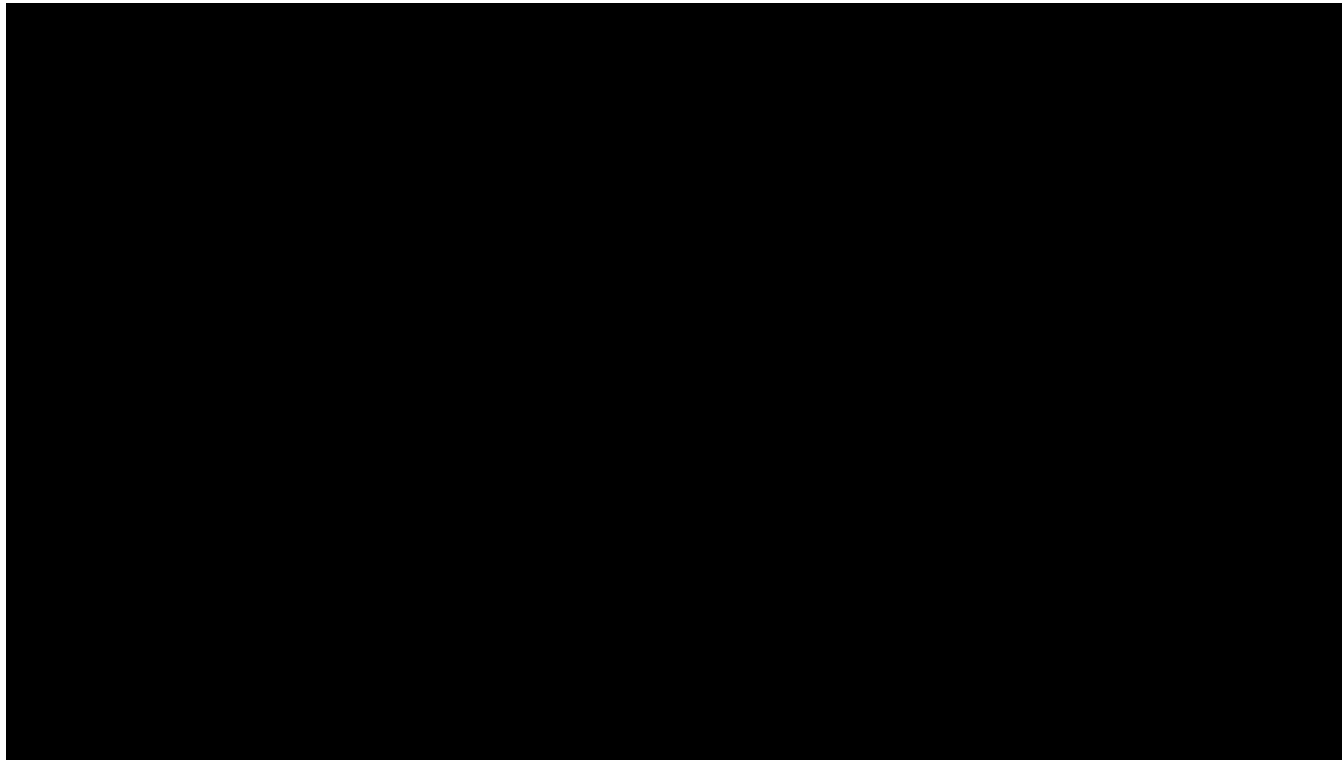


## Supporting the development of strong socio-emotional skills

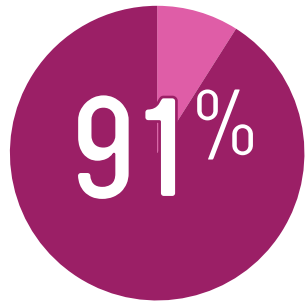
- Partner with the 92Y annually on the #givingtuesday campaign to develop a digital campaign to get TFDP messages and resources to more families around the holidays.
- Published an Op-Ed in Huffington Post about the benefits of family dinner.

**Note:** representative sample of partners

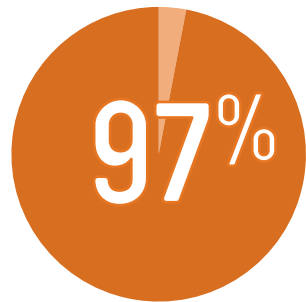
# THE FAMILY BREAKFAST PROJECT & CHEERIOS



## FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM OUR PROGRAMS



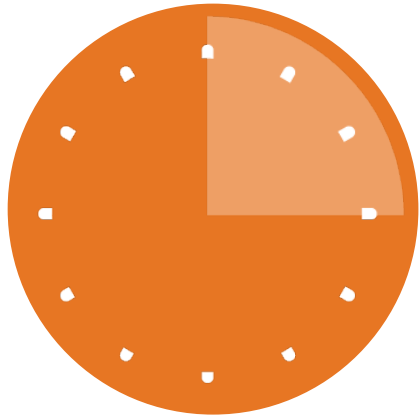
**of families are  
positively satisfied**



**of families projected  
dinner improvement**

**Families showed the  
greatest increase in:**

- ✓ Improving food preparation
- ✓ Reducing mealtime distraction
- ✓ Engaging in more satisfying conversation



**Please be back in 5  
minutes!**



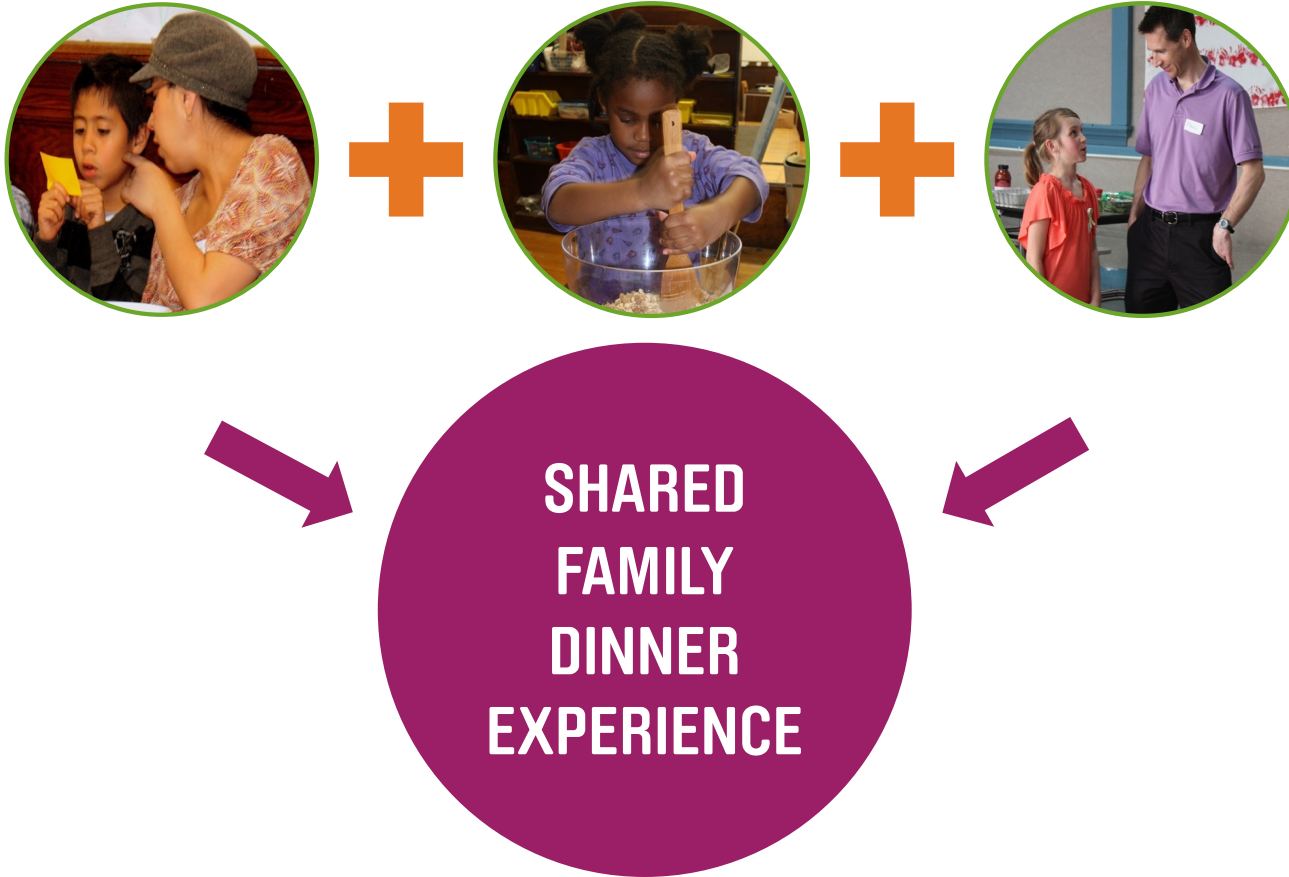
**PART 2:**  
**Diving Deeper into Community  
Programs**





# How to facilitate a Community Dinner conversation

# RECIPE FOR COMMUNITY DINNERS



# VIRTUAL COMMUNITY DINNER EVENT FLOW



**Welcome**



**Game Demo**



**Dinner Breakout**



**Facilitated  
Conversation/Kids'  
Activities**



**Wrap-Up**

## YOUR ROLE AS A FACILITATOR



To create a space where families feel comfortable opening up and empowered to discuss their experiences and think about ways to improve their food, fun and conversation

## THE DISCUSSION FORMULA IS TRIED AND TRUE

1. **Introduction: Why family dinner is important to me**
2. Some of the research
3. Strengths: What is working well?
4. Challenges: What makes family dinner tough?
5. Brainstorm: Overcoming challenges
6. Ideas from TFDP
7. Closing Comments



**Why is family dinner  
important to you?**



**Let's facilitate a  
conversation!**

# RECIPE FOR A GREAT CONVERSATION



**Strengths**



**Challenges**



**Brainstorm**



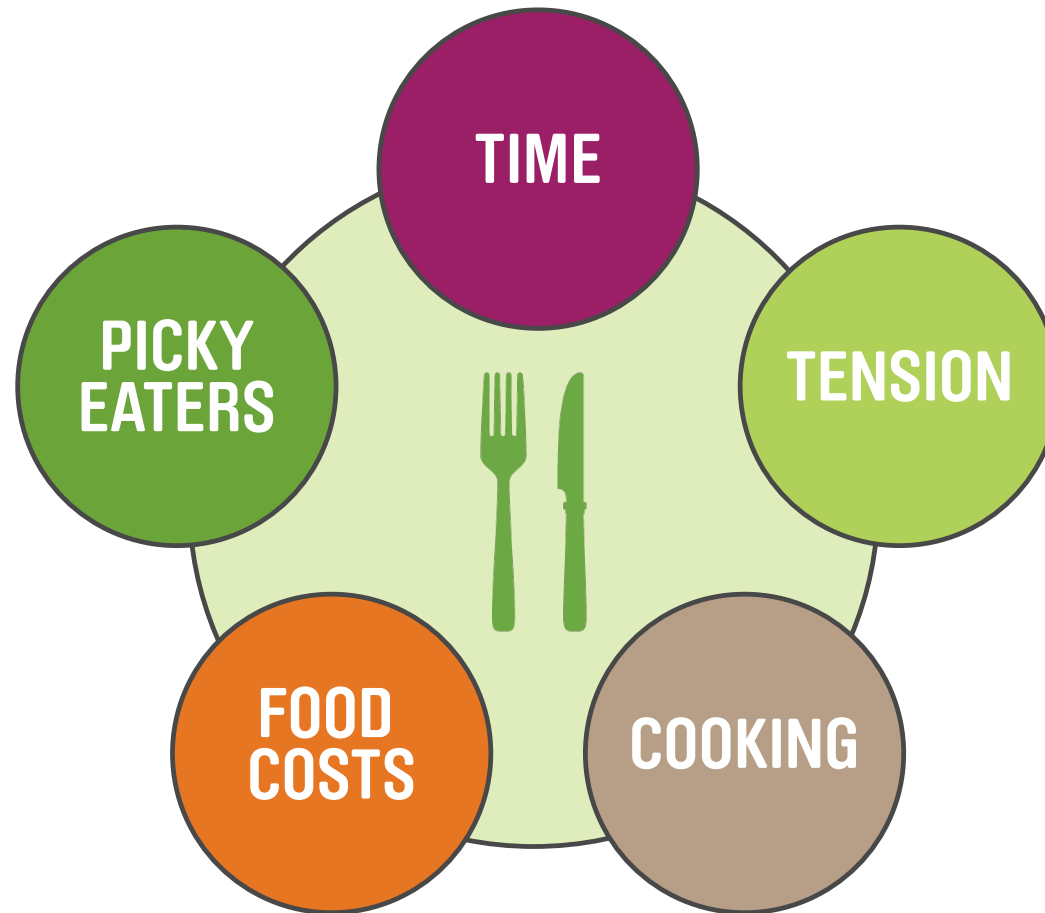
**Ideas**

## ADDRESSING TRICKY SITUATIONS DURING THE CONVERSATION

### Most common obstacles you'll encounter during facilitation:

1. One participant “hogs the floor”
2. Difficulty engaging with shy participants
3. Off-topic comments or ideas
4. Parenting tactics that contradict TFDP recommendations
5. Contrarian participants

# IDEAS TO HELP OVERCOME OBSTACLES



# “WE’RE TOO BUSY”



Make double  
batches



Dinner Swap,  
eg. Military  
families



Cook “quick  
food” like  
breakfast or  
lunch foods



Consider  
making Family  
Breakfast or a  
late-night snack  
an intentional  
meal



Most reliable  
time to connect



Push back on  
culture of  
busyness



Only takes 22  
minutes

# “WE’RE TOO DISTRACTED BY TECHNOLOGY”



“If you can’t  
beat ‘em, join  
‘em”



Playfulness  
around  
technology



Check all  
devices at the  
door



Use to share  
photos, texts,  
etc.



Use to verify  
factual  
questions



Agree on same  
rules

# “They’re too picky”

---

Parents decide what, where, & when; kids decide how much

---

Get toddlers to try foods

---

Model your enjoyment

---

Cut down on snacking

---

Rule of 15: Familiarity breeds acceptance

---

Don’t promise a benefit from eating a vegetable

---

Dessert is not a reward

---

One basic meal that can be customized

---

*(Satter, E, 2008; Mascola, Bryson et al, 2010; Galloway et al, 2006; Menella et al, 2001| Sullivan & Birch, 1990; Coulthard & Thakker, 2015)*

# “WE’RE TOO TENSE”



“Play with food: Raggedy Ann Salad, food collage



Prepare a list of meals that everyone will agree on



Go easy on teaching manners



Avoid topics that usually result in fights (e.g., grades or messy rooms)



Limit technology at the table



Parents and kids adhere to same technology rules



Laughter and feeling listened to are best antidotes



Play games and tell stories

# TEENAGERS DO WANT TO EAT WITH YOU

80% of teens would rather have dinner with parents (CASA 2007)

Dinner is rated high on list of activities for teens

Dinnertime when most likely to talk with parents

Teens have most to gain in terms of lowering high risk behaviors

(Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer et al, 2008; Fulkerson, Story, et al, 2006; CASA 2007, 2009, 2011;

# YOUNG KIDS WHO DON'T SIT STILL

1

Lower your expectations— 5 or 10 minutes is fine

2

Great time to start the practice and good for young parents' marriage

3

Harness their energy

4

Play games like “would you rather?” or “I spy”

5

Involve young kids in cooking

6

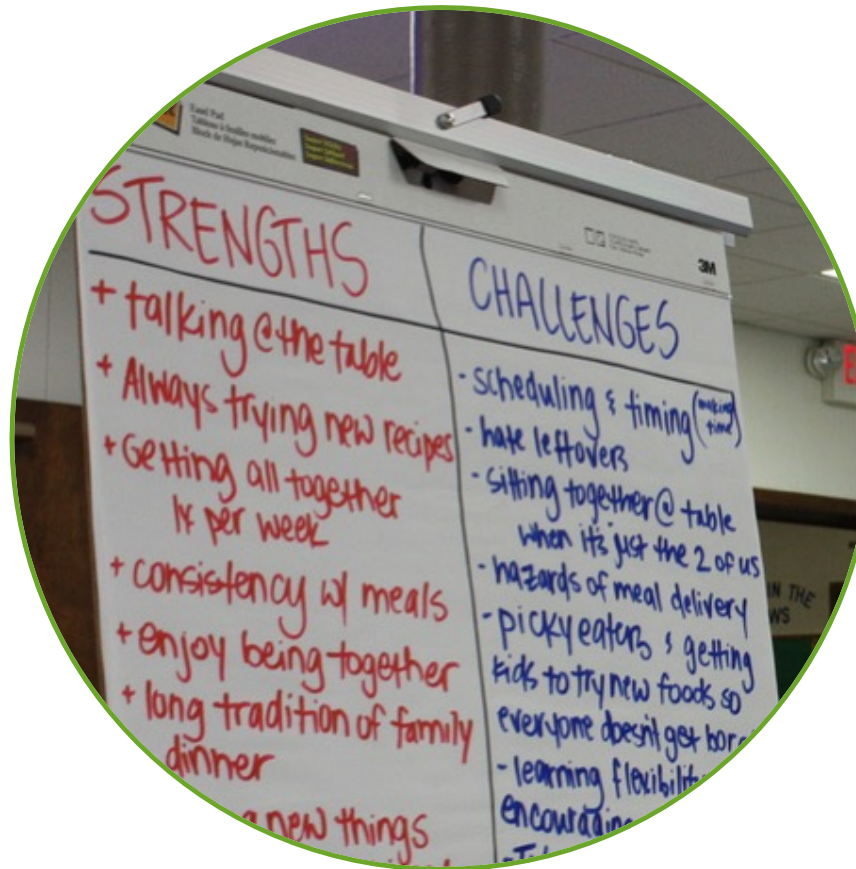
Have them make placemats with pictures of the family, favorite foods

# RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES WITH RESOURCES

TIME	• Dinner Tonight
COOKING	• TFDP's Online Recipes
PICKY EATERS	• Build Your Own Recipes
TENSION AT THE TABLE	• Dinner Games
FOOD COSTS	• Dinner Tonight on a Budget

# PARENT/CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

## FIRST MEETING: STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS



## PARENT/CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

### SECOND MEETING: ENCOURAGING FUN AND CONVERSATION

- Conversation Jar
- Games that facilitate conversation, eg. Rose, Thorn, Bud; Two truths and a tale tale; 20Qs about a family memory
- Story-telling
- Questions that are window-openers vs. Qs that are door-slamers

# CONVERSATION JAR



What is your favorite thing to do outside?



If you had superpowers what would they be and how would you use them to help people?



"A person's a person no matter how small.." What does Dr. Seuss mean by this?



What will you miss most about winter?



Name two things you feel thankful for today



Which book character would you like as a friend?



What are 3 things you can do for someone who isn't feeling well?



What is your earliest memory?

# Dinner in a Box



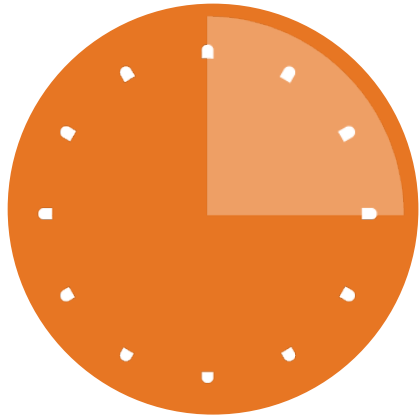
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## DINNER IN A BOX– CASE EG: WELLSPRING MULTI-SERVICE AGENCY

- Wrap-around services serving several MA communities
- Food Pantry and Food Truck where can pick up food or delivered
- Check List to go over: timeline, contents, access, feedback
- TFDP provided 4-5 resources each week, for 6 weeks.
- Ambassador pitch
- Survey delivered after end of DIB, digitally or by ED
- Like colorful, upbeat messaging, different from usual public health messages
- Now want to add cooking video, cookbook, food made in kitchen

## SPECIAL TROVE OF RESOURCES

- <https://lms.mghcme.org/TFDPResourcesForPartners#group-tabs-node-course-default2>
- Can circumvent \$500 charge with secret password.....
- FAMILYDINNERPARTNER
- Shareable, printable resources including DT, Budget Friendly DT, Tip sheets, Conversation starters, Recipe for Conversation, Spanish resources, Guides and manuals, literacy resources



**Please be back in 5  
minutes!**



**PART 3:**  
**BRINGING TFDP to Your**  
**COMMUNITY**



## BRINGING TFDP TO YOUR COMMUNITY

- Envision impact with some exercises
- Case Examples to discuss
- Video of a TFDP Champion
- Social media
- Program evaluation & feedback



# Activity: Envisioning Impact



**Reflection time!**



Photo credit: Amy Peters

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

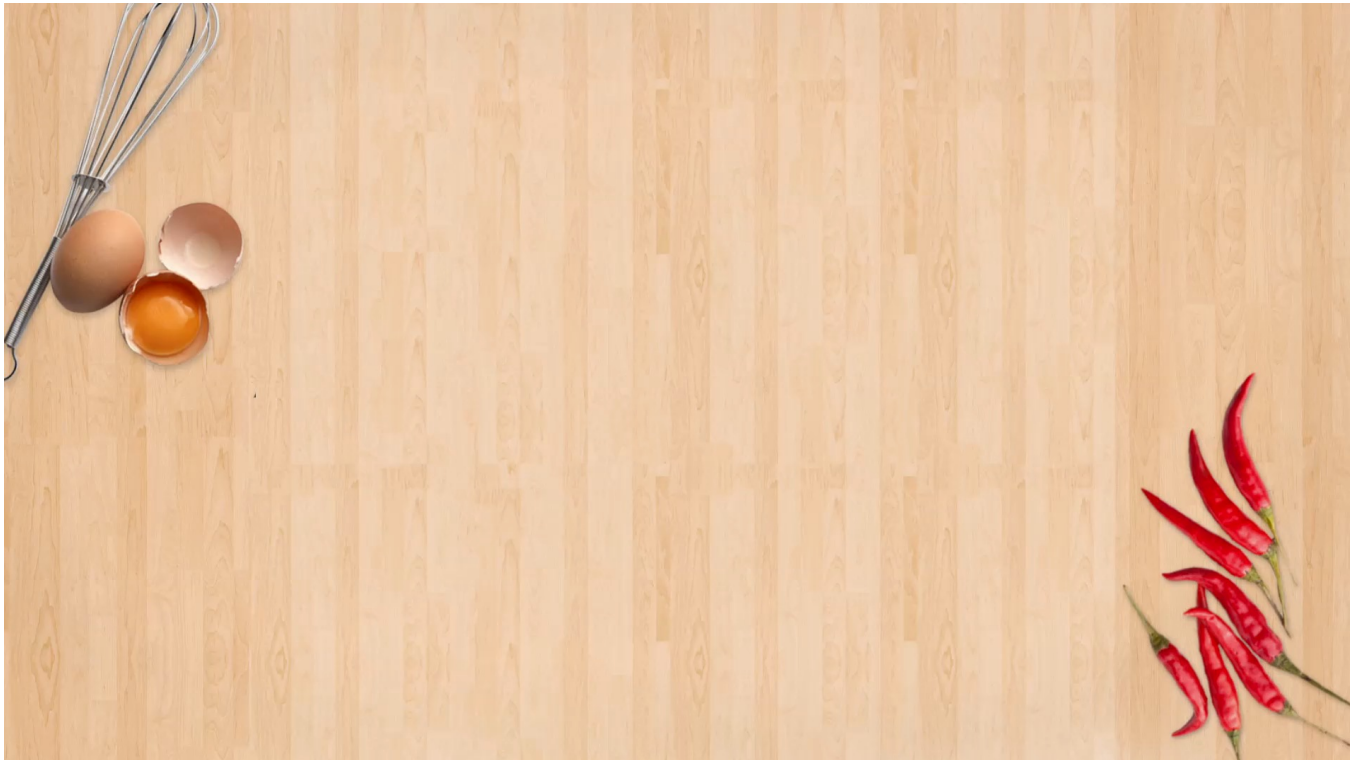
1. Why made the programs successful at The Quincy Children's Museum?
2. How was the The Museum able to integrate TFDP into its own programming?
3. What skills does it take to be this responsive to your community?
4. In what ways do the mission and goals of the QCM align with those of TFDP?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think that Dinner in a Box was a compelling program for Wellspring?
- What did they hope it would offer to their clients
- What function does collecting survey data serve?
- How might Dinner in a Box help the families that you serve?

# A CHAMPION'S STORY-- KHERA



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:




1. What helped Khera have successful event?
2. How did Khera work to expand TFDP programming in her community?
3. How can goal setting help you have a deeper impact in your community?

## APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED



1. What are some family dinner challenges your community might face?
2. How do you know that these barriers exist?

## SOME “DOS” AND “DON'TS”

### DO

-  Tag us!
-  Use our #
-  Share event photos

### DON'T

-  Use identifying characteristics
-  Use photos without permission

# SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY





**Help, Thanks,  
and Wow!**



**What comes next**

## OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

...that families come in all shapes and sizes

...that dinners don't need to be *perfect* to be effective (and they don't need to be dinner!)

...that dinners are better when all family members participate

...that healthy food matters (...but we're not the food police)

...that we're realistic about technology

...that **fun** and **conversation** are every bit as important as **food**

**THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR MOVEMENT!**



**INSPIRE  
CHAMPIONS**

**BUILD A  
COMMUNITY**

**HELP FAMILIES  
EXPERIENCE THE  
BENEFITS OF  
FAMILY DINNER**



**Evaluation time!**